



THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON VIOLENCE IN  
THE COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

RESEARCH REPORT

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF  
THE PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF  
NEWSPAPER AND TELEVISION JOURNALISTS  
IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

by  
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1976



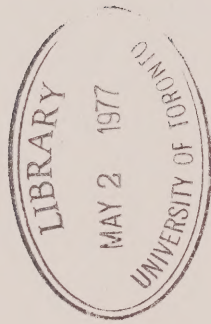
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THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON VIOLENCE  
IN THE COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

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## INTRODUCTION

The gathering and processing of news is paradoxically one of the most blatantly visible of all social phenomena, but at the same time, one of the least studied, and certainly one of the least understood by the public at large. The work of the news person, of course, is basically to tell his community about thousands of ordinary and earthshaking things that collectively involve millions of people from every corner of the world, especially that corner where home happens to be, each and every day of the year. This is an enormous task, involving the selection, writing, and general processing into news of truly incredible volumes of raw information. Like the harried shoemaker of proverbial reknown whose own children went barefoot, the news fraternity rarely finds the time or the energy to tell its own important story. Or, it may be quite simply that news people, like so many of the rest of us when we are asked to describe whatever it is we do for a living, do not see the significance and newsworthiness of their own daily routines.

Misleading stereotypes of news people abound, as they do whenever information about any group is lacking, and like all stereotypes, these are worse than useless. They say nothing about the tentative, almost shy, approach

to life that is so much more common among news people than anything approaching Hollywood's gross caricatures. They give no hint of the grinding, boring routine and sheer hard work that constitute the larger part of the news person's working life. Finally, the stereotypes do hint at some of the frailties and problems in the newsgathering business -- among others, the cynicism, the sensationalism, the violence, the simplism, and the lack of a sense of the importance of yesterday and tomorrow. But they do it in a distorted way that only generates misunderstanding and resentment among news people, and confusion, occasionally fear, among their reading and viewing clients.

This study is essentially descriptive. Each chapter, with the important exception of the last one where a number of conclusions are drawn and suggestions made, describes rather than analyzes an element of the newsgathering process, the attitudes and perceptions of the people involved, the environment in which they work. The research material comes from news people themselves in newspapers and television stations across Ontario, and the writer regarded his work as being primarily to sort, occasionally to interpret, the many descriptions, anecdotes and comments so that they might make a logical and meaningful whole.

The method of the study was simple, an interview process not unlike that used by news people themselves in the gathering of much of their information. A questionnaire

with 32 questions was developed, a copy of which is provided as an appendix to this report. The questions were put to 30 newspaper and television news people during August, September and October of 1976; the answers tape-recorded, and later transcribed and collated to provide the portrait of the news business offered in the following pages. Every effort was made to keep the interview situations as spontaneous as possible, and only in one case was a subject telephoned for an appointment in advance. We simply walked into newsrooms, and sought people who could take the time to talk with us. We found the people we talked with open, frank and relaxed; only once, in a small television news operation, were we confronted with hostility and an obvious mistrust of our research motives.

Despite the relatively spontaneous nature of the interview process, and the obviously informal approach to subject selection, every effort was made to ensure that we covered all sorts and conditions of news people in the interview sample. Subjects were interviewed in eight Ontario communities: Windsor, London, Kitchener, Toronto, Oshawa, Sudbury, Belleville, and Peterborough. Sixteen of the people interviewed worked for newspapers, 12 for television news operations, and two for a major wire service; collectively, they represented nine daily newspapers, five television stations, and, of course, one wire service.

The ages of our subjects ranged from the youngest at 21 to the oldest in his mid-sixties; 23 of the subjects were men, and seven were women -- a proportionate share being given to women in the sample somewhat larger than their actual representation in the business. We also took care to ensure that all levels of responsibility were represented in the sample: Sixteen worked as reporters; five were columnists, bureau chiefs, or otherwise had responsibility somewhat beyond the reportorial level; and nine held positions as senior editors or news directors.

## Chapter I

### News: Defining All That's Fit to Print

News is Israel's commando raid on the airport at Entebbe; news is organized labor's day of national protest against the Canadian government's anti-inflation program; and news is a young woman reporter in Peterborough finding a body under her television studio's transmission mast. News -- or more precisely, newsworthiness -- is a quality apparently inherent in certain human events and situations, often mystifying to the layman, and especially to anyone who suddenly finds himself for the first time the object of a reporter's attention, but which newsgatherers and processors confidently and intuitively recognize when they run into it.

It is by illustration and example, not by precise and abstracted definition, that news people universally attempt to explain their understanding of the nature of news, and this they can do eloquently, assertively, and at length. Entebbe, the labor movement's day of protest, and the body under the television mast -- these are all newsworthy situations, and every reporter worth his pay would identify them as such. But ask a news person to define the phenomenon of newsworthiness in the abstract, and, characteristically, he or she will be hardpressed to oblige.

A very senior and very excellent editor who works for a Toronto newspaper provided a quite typical case in point. In response to our third question, seeking the abstracted definition of news, he felt able to tell us only that a news story must "inform". As an afterthought, he added that if a story "entertains" the reader as well, so much the better. But the same man, when asked in questions one and two to name specific stories of the past six months which excited him, and to describe the elements which made them memorable, was much more articulate and, in an indirect way, much more informative.

The Israeli raid on Entebbe Airport was beyond any doubt the biggest story of the decade, he told us. "And we responded in this newsroom with every resource we had, and just kept it going for days and days to show people how there may not have been anything comparable carried out even in World War II."

And what qualities did the Entebbe story have that it merited such a marshalling of newsroom resources?

"Very, very high drama. The national dedication of the Israeli rescue squad. The underlying principle of a country under siege deciding it wouldn't pay blackmail, and going to fantastic lengths to pluck the source of the ransome away from the ransomer.

"You know, that story had everything. It had a sense of history about it."

Another of our interview subjects, a reflective and

scholarly man, long since removed from the hurly-burly of the newsroom and now directing the daily production of the editorial page of a large Western Ontario newspaper, also placed Entebbe very high on his list of significant recent news happenings.

"It's the risk involved," he explained. "The potential implications internationally of something like that, plus just the adventure." An important element in his understanding of Entebbe as the almost-perfect newsman's news story was this: "To a certain extent (there is) the gratification I suppose some people might get in reading a story of this kind. Hostages have been taken and a country deals with it in this way -- a great deal of meticulous planning and daring, bravado, if you like."

Gratification is the operative word here, the notion that the ideal news story will entertain the reader in some way, perhaps serve as something of a fantasy fulfillment vehicle. This interesting notion is discussed below, along with other insights gleaned from many descriptions of news situations gathered during the interview process. But for the moment, let's stay with the problem of the news person's difficulty in producing an abstracted definition of news.

Newsrooms are full of whimsical aphorisms about news, but these are rarely more than tangentially descriptive. Typical is the American Leo Rosten's semi-serious quip: "To many newspapermen, no news is bad news, good news is dull news, and bad news makes marvellous copy."

Romantic notions also abound about the nature of news and the reporter's ability to seek it out. These are deserving of some passing mention here, not because there is any substantive logic behind them, but simply because they are surprisingly prevalent in newsrooms everywhere and would seem to help shape the journalistic ethos. Certainly, their widespread presence, half-believed though they may be in fact, supports the argument that news people tend to understand the news phenomenon intuitively rather than rationally. There is, for instance, the "nose for news" which, it would seem, is a sort of special olfactory talent God-given to reporters, and perhaps to bloodhounds as well, but with which ordinary folk simply are not blessed. City editors since time immemorial have looked for this mythic news nose in aspiring young reporters on the basic assumption that if it isn't present, a youngster can no more hope to be trained as a journalist than a child with a tin ear can hope to be trained as a concert pianist.

Phyllis Wilson, the Canadian journalist who now teaches journalism at Carleton University in Ottawa, has given this tongue-in-cheek description of the romantic notion that the ability to perceive news is a matter of talent:

"There is a belief, widespread in the news world, that the recognition of news is intuitive, that it is a faculty with which the select are born not bred, that a Geiger

counter clicks in the heads of the gifted few in proximity to the uranium of news."<sup>1</sup>

When the whimsy and romance of newsroom tradition are moved gently aside, and the news person is obliged to deal directly and conceptually with what constitutes news, he will do so with some reluctance and hesitation, but at least the framework of a definition in the abstract begins to emerge. It runs something like this: News must be of interest to a great many people in the reading, viewing or listening audience, and, ideally, it will be of importance to them as well. Twenty-eight of our 30 interview subjects offered versions of the interest-importance concept in response to our third question seeking the conceptual definition. A third ingredient, suggested by 23 of the subjects, was immediacy -- immediacy in both the temporal and geographic senses of the word. Simply stated, this means that news is considered stale if it is more than half a day old, a time frame that reduces to mere hours in the case of the electronic media; and geographically, the closer to home a given event occurs, the greater the emphasis it is liable to receive in print or broadcast relative to other items of comparable information content.

A sample of the responses to the third question follows: "Well, it (news) has to involve a great number of people

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1. Wilson, Phyllis, "The Nature of News" in Journalism Communication and the Law, G. Stuart Adam, ed. Toronto: Prentice-Hall, 1976.

either directly or peripherally, and it's got to be of some interest." This from an editor in London, and from a reporter in Peterborough: "It's the unusual, it's the entertaining. It's what I need to know to be a reasonable, responsible human being." In Sudbury, a television reporter explained: "If it affects people's lives, if it interests them -- that makes it newsworthy."

A copy editor in London offered this thought: "Well, I believe that whatever it is that has happened (the newsworthy event) must affect or influence or interest a wide cross-section of people."

The immediacy element emerged in this response from another reporter in Peterborough: "...how many people it affects, and how fresh it is. You can't keep rehashing a story, even if it is a big story. And you have to remember that a story might be big here but not be big in Toronto." Finally, and also stressing immediacy, a columnist in Windsor told us: "Does it matter to people who are reading your newspaper? What's news in Windsor is not necessarily news in Sudbury. I think there's a great responsibility to remembering that newsworthiness is something people want to know about, and what they want to know about is what's going on where they are."

Immediacy plus interest plus importance -- the basic, and in themselves, not especially revealing generalities about the nature of news which one can find in any journalism school text on news writing and reporting. Professor Mitchell Charnley, for instance, joins the majority of our interview

subjects when he offers this definition of news to students using his standard book on journalism fundamentals: "News is the timely report of facts or opinion that hold interest or importance, or both, for a considerable number of people."<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen, journalists, (and journalism professors, too, it seems), have difficulty dealing abstractly with the concept of news in any subtle way. The three words -- interest, importance, and immediacy -- become much more important and descriptive of journalism's realities, however, when they are examined in the complex intuitive context which is the mental environment in which most journalistic decisions are taken about news selection, writing and editing on a day-to-day basis. The answers provided in response to our first two questions, especially the second question, are rich in indirect commentary upon the nature of news from this intuitive perspective, and one becomes aware of subtle but critical elements present in the news preparation process. These point to worrisome potentialities for distortion that are built quite automatically into the process of producing the daily portrait of reality painted for us by the mass media in their information dissemination mode.

The most significant of these problematic elements has to do with the understanding most news people bring to "importance" and "interest" as primary ingredients of news. The typical news person seems intuitively to comprehend these qualities, which seem such a tidily matched and logical pair

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1. Charnley, Mitchell, Reporting. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975. P. 44.

in our abstracted definition, in such a way that he finds himself frequently confronted with situations where "important" news is uninteresting, and "interesting" news is unimportant. When choices must be made, and frequently they must, given the enormous volumes of available material and the severe limitations of publishing space or broadcast time, the interesting but relatively unimportant item is more likely to be given the higher priority.

We get something of the sense of this in the words of a London copy editor: "Perhaps I'm jaded by the constant flow of words, words, words across the desk, but it's the offbeat stuff that appeals to me...often the little items. You read them you get amazed, or angry, or amused, hopefully, and that's what makes a news story for me."

And perhaps even more pertinently, this from a senior editor in Windsor: "You have to ask yourself how many readers would be interested in this story. This applies to important, but perhaps not interesting stories, but it also applies to very interesting stories that are not important."

"And in that I mean the offbeat and the funny, peculiar stories, if you like. Something that happens to a person that is very offbeat or unusual. Maybe it doesn't have earthshaking ramifications, but people like to read about it."

News people seem to understand the word "interesting" as though it were a synonym for "entertaining", and it is the conventional wisdom of the newsroom that the reader or viewer must be entertained if his interest is to be held for any length

of time longer than the fleeting seconds required to scan a headline, or hear the bulleted introduction to a newscast. Though newspapers and television stations carry out extensive and sophisticated surveys of their audiences' reading and viewing behavior on a basis so regular as to be continuing, the resultant data rarely find their way to the working levels of the newsroom. Such data would provide rather less than a perfect standard for newsroom personnel in many respects, obviously, but as matters now stand, most working news people in most newsrooms are left with nothing more scientific than their intuition and their traditions to guide them in the determination of what might interest -- that is to say, entertain -- the reader or viewer.

It is, for instance, conventionally accepted that an interesting story is a graphic story. Ideally, the material being written about will require the use of concrete nouns, active verbs, and adjectives that describe real things and real emotions. In television, of course, this means that the good stuff provides dramatic film clips. Print newsmen particularly have shared with novelists for years the knowledge that every human brain comes equipped with a sort of mini movie screen; if the reader is to be grabbed and held, the words on the page must be transformed into images on this mental screen.

It is also the conventional wisdom of the newsroom that Walter Mitty, James Thurber's pathetic character who fantasized away the boredom of his painfully average life by

daydreaming himself into a thousand heroic roles, is alive and well in every newspaper reader and every television viewer. News people call this Walter Mitty phenomenon "human interest". It means writing about the extraordinary things that happen to other people in such a way that the reader or viewer can identify and, for a moment, share in something different. The category includes the tragedies and triumphs of other lives; the hardship and adventure; the bravery and cowardice; the fame and infamy; and, quite often, simply, the peculiar and different. This last concept is described in the hoary newsroom aphorism which tells us: "It isn't news if a dog bites a man, but if a man bites a dog..."

Finally, news people believe that audiences stay with a story if it has a strong element of conflict or controversy. It may be possible to categorize other entertaining qualities, but most news people will agree that a story is "interesting" if its material lends itself to graphic presentation; if it contains a powerful "human interest" element with which the reader or viewer can identify in his fantasies; and if it has at least a thread of conflict or controversy running through.

Something of the sense of the news person's appreciation of the "interesting" in the news is evident in the words of a Toronto reporter as he described a sequence of events in mid-1976 involving an attempt to kidnap the daughter of a well-known Toronto family. "The Eaton kidnapping was pretty sensational, you know. One of the big families in Toronto. It's the kind of story that, you know, you can really jazz it up

and it's got a lot of thrills and we go for that kind of stuff."

An extreme example? More blunt, and perhaps more cynical than most, but not especially extreme. A television reporter in Kitchener gave us this insight as he described interviewing a woman who had lost everything in a flood.

"...in the course of the interview, a little tear trickled out of that woman's eye and proceeded down her cheek. Well, he (the reporter's accompanying cameraman) was on his toes, and he zoomed right in on that tear. Shortly after a flood relief fund was set up, and I don't know how many thousands of dollars that little tear contributed."

Clearly, the reporter's motivation in the second instance was decent and pro-social, but both instances describe a common pattern in the news fraternity's perception of what constitutes "interesting" news.

So much for the notion that news must be "interesting"; what of the notion that it ought also to be "important"? Unfortunately, as we have suggested, important news is not necessarily interesting news. All too often, it seems, important, but essentially abstract, processes go on in society -- processes of public finance and public administration, processes at work in a changing society and all its institutions which lend themselves primarily to the abstract consideration now, but will have no concrete reality until some remote future. Things of the sort are often critically important to know about, yet their very abstractness makes them difficult to write about, difficult to present visually on television, and (according to newsroom convention) difficult in the reading or viewing.

The result: They tend to be neglected in the news, though we found it interesting that the problem is recognized, and apparently worrisome to, at least a small core among the news people we talked to -- 5 of the total sample, to be precise.

One of the most illuminating comments on the problem was offered by the head of one of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's news operations in Ontario. He suggested by way of example the periodically-appearing items pertaining to the patriation of the British North America Act, Canada's primary constitutional document which is a statute of the British Parliament at Westminster.

"That story may be boring to people, and we try to make it interesting, but there's only a certain amount you can do to make it interesting.

"But it is of extreme importance, and we have a secondary responsibility as news people to not only inform at the lowest mass level, but to inform at a somewhat higher level, too."

The authors of a federal government report in 1969 that recommended, among other things, the establishment of the now-defunct federal public relations agency, Information Canada, recognized this phenomenon when they described, perhaps with inappropriate flippancy, the reporting of federal affairs by the members of the National Press Gallery in Ottawa:

"The Press Gallery at Ottawa would rather report the rivalry of cabinet ministers, or the gay times in the Commons question period, than the technicalities of some new legislation to aid immigrants. The mass media as a

whole would rather report the daily score of prime ministerial kisses than government subsidies for adult education."<sup>1</sup>

As a final note regarding the distorting qualities contained in the news person's intuitive perception of the concepts of "interest" and "importance", it is ironic that while the important is frequently subordinated to the interesting, on relatively rare occasions when news is both important and interesting, it may very well be overplayed. The Entebbe incident may provide a case in point. It received enormous coverage, and as we have said (see Appendix B) it was regarded as a highly significant news story by Ontario news people.

As a news story, Entebbe had everything a reporter might wish for in terms of "interest", and at the same time, it surely was "important" by anyone's absolute standard of such things. But did it really deserve the extraordinary emphasis it received when one considers that, dramatic and exciting though it may have been, it was really just one incident of bravado in the much more important (but generally "uninteresting") continuum of evolving relationships in the Middle East?

Immediacy, the third prime concept in our conceptual definition of news, also contains elements with considerable

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1. To Know and Be Known: The Report of the Task Force on Government Information. Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1969. P. 11.

potential for distortion of reality when it is considered at the richer, intuitive, level of understanding where the news person ordinarily deals with it.

Temporal immediacy, the imperative that news must be a chronicling of events as close to the fleeting present as possible, impress two distortive elements upon the public's media-created portrait of social reality. In the first place, the news person has difficulty dealing with information as news when it is generated by a process of evolving activity over an extended period of time. Second, and closely related, news must be new, even when it can be seen as a clearly detached event in a short time span. Regardless of an event's absolute and historic importance, it loses any news value it may have in as short a time as 12 hours. If a new "angle" (to use the jargon of the newsroom) can be found, a forgotten detail gleaned and emphasized, then an aging story can be made new again for another half a day.

A recent Canadian example of the workings of both the distortive elements of the temporal imperative is to be seen in the 18 to 24 months of media coverage of preparations for the Olympic Games in Montreal. The preparations for the 1976 games involved the organization over an extended period of time of vast human, financial, and engineering resources -- in other words, a process, leading to a future conclusion . Yet any news consumer who takes the time to review a file of 18 months of media coverage of the process will recognize that it was not

presented as a process at all, but rather as a collection of unrelated crises, calamities, and occasional triumphs -- each occurring within the isolated and abbreviated time frame allotted to it by the media.

The importance of temporal immediacy to the newsman was very evident to us in reviewing the results of the interviews. 21 of the subjects made some important reference to the phenomenon as a necessary component of news in the course of responding to the first three questions. Here are some examples.

A wire service writer in Toronto told us, quite succinctly, that a news story "has to have some new angle to it." At an Eastern Ontario television station, a reporter told us: "The more immediate a story is, the higher up it goes in terms of its priority."

Another reporter, this one an employee of an Eastern Ontario newspaper, placed immediacy at the top of her list of newsworthy qualities: "It is easier to cover events if they are immediate and happening at the moment."

Finally, we recall especially a reporter in Windsor who had momentary difficulty in response to our first question recalling any news stories of the recent past, let alone the two or three most important ones. "That's damned hard," she said. "Every week there's a bigger story and every day. News constantly renews itself, and every day there's a new big story. I just go by the lead story of the day; I don't think in terms of the biggest story of the year."

Immediacy in the geographic sense is also an important quality in establishing newsworthiness priorities, and it, too, has a distorting quality, at least in the sense that news people feel powerfully constrained to give highest priority to events close to home. (Again, please see Appendix B).

Geocentrism is natural enough in human beings, of course, and, for that matter, an editor or news director who did not give comprehensive coverage of his home territory would not be doing his job. Granting that the local emphasis in news is more to be encouraged than discouraged, one suspects that the phenomenon sometimes gets in the way of developing adequate national and international perspectives in audiences.

We noted, for instance, that the continuing story of organized labor's day of national protest against the national anti-inflation program in Canada was, by far and away, the most mentioned story in response to our first question. No fewer than 16 mentioned this story as one of the three most important news events of the period. What is important in this context, however, is the fact that seven of the people who mentioned the story, a significant minority, described its importance on a local rather than a national scale. In Peterborough, we were told the day of protest was important because the Outboard Marine Corporation and Canadian General Electric employ many local citizens who, of course, are active unionists. In Oshawa and Windsor, we were told that the presence in their respective populations of thousands of members of the United Auto Workers' Union made the day of protest a most

important local story. And, as one might suspect, in Sudbury it was pointed out to us that the day of protest was important because nearly everyone in town works for one or other of the two nickel mining corporations there, and is a member of the giant Steelworkers' Union.

Converting a national story into a local story is probably more a matter of mild interest than serious concern, and it is quite natural that everyone, news people and their readers and viewers alike, should be most concerned with a world that ends several miles beyond the town limits. But a world thus understood is still a world misapprehended, and this should be a matter of some passing concern.

There is another matter of greater concern, however. When the media bring information into the community from the world outside, there is a tendency to select items which might have happened at home. Unfortunately, (and we discuss this phenomenon of "psychological proximity" quite thoroughly in the next chapter), such items tend to have violent themes, and to collectively paint an unfairly violent portrait of the outside world. The reporting of a small but steady diet of bank robberies, rapes, murders and so forth from other communities also has a tendency, in conjunction with occasional reports of local versions of these and other crimes, to suggest to local audiences that such crimes may be more prevalent at home than they are in reality.



## CHAPTER II

### Violence: "Nobody Wants to Read about Good People"

News people taken as a group are not inherently violent, at least they have no discernibly greater predilection for the actual or vicarious experience of violence in any of its forms than has any other group in society -- and perhaps a lot less than some. Public stereotypes of the news person may suggest otherwise, a concept we discuss in Chapter III, but by and large, in the process of conducting our interviews, we were as much impressed with the very ordinariness of news people as we were with any other qualities they might possess. As private individuals, they share with everyone else the ordinary joys and concerns associated with the common human commitment to the building of decent lives in safe and civilized communities.

This notwithstanding, however, the preponderant evidence of many studies of news content demonstrates that something of a mild Jekyll to Hyde transformation seems to occur when the suburban citizen of ordinary concerns turns himself or herself each day into the working news person.<sup>1</sup>

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1. For examples of studies of violence content in the news media, the reader is referred to several studies prepared in association



Doubtless there are many reasons for this phenomenon, but one which we believe to be especially significant, and which is demonstrably evident from our interview data, is the simple fact that information about human and natural violence of all kinds tends to make nearly perfect news. In the light of the intuitive perception of the nature of news which we have described at length in the preceeding pages, it becomes self-evident that information generating situations which contain powerful elements of violence of one kind or another almost inevitably fit the news person's intuitive rationale, with all its inherent subtlties and contradictions, that news must be "interesting", "important", and "immediate".

The news person, therefore, tends to gravitate toward violent information, not because it is violent per se, but because all his instincts and traditions tell him it is intensely newsworthy.

Clearly, information about a rape, a bank robbery, an explosion down the street, a hurricane, or even the stealthy and sophisticated computer theft of corporate funds, is "interesting". Violent events are almost always concrete situations which lend themselves so readily to graphic narration; they generate clearly identifiable heros, villains and victims acting their parts in richly human emotional circumstances.

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with this one for the Royal Commission, including a second by the author, An Analysis of Some Aspects of Newsflow Patterns and Influences in the Province of Ontario. A number of important studies are identified in the bibliography, Appendix D to this report.

Violent events also tend to be immediate in both the temporal and geographic senses. Temporally, they are unexpected, sudden, and run their courses quickly. Even the political or financial scandal or controversy tends to break swiftly and unexpectedly, at least as such occurrences are presented as news.

An American scholar, Todd Hunt, has suggested that an important distorting element in all journalism is the reporter's tendency to see news items as "events" rather than as aspects of "processes".<sup>1</sup> Processes, as we have seen in Chapter I, are difficult to write about, given journalism's traditions, and the journalist's intuitive understanding of the nature of news, as we have described it. Reporters inevitably attempt to extract "events" out of "processes", and when this is difficult or impossible to do, the information may be underplayed or ignored. When an "event" stands naturally isolated from "process", however, as is so often the case, superficially at least, with violence, news people gravitate to it. By way of example, we have discussed in another context the event-centred approach journalism took to the story of Canada's recent Olympic Games; another example of a process being distorted by event-centred journalism must be the tortuous course of the Watergate affair in the United States.

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1. Hunt, Todd, "Beyond the Journalistic Event: The Changing Concept of News." Mass Comm Review 1 (2), April, 1974, pp. 23 - 30.

Violent news also tends to be geographically immediate. Not, obviously, in the sense that all industrial explosions, all spectacular air disasters, and all illegal misuses of municipal funds occur in one's home town, but rather that almost all such events could happen there. This phenomenon has been described as "psychological proximity", a term that simply means that some news, usually violent news, has a universal quality -- it can happen anywhere, but people thousands of miles away will be interested because it could have happened where they are. An earthquake in Peking, a rape in Toronto, or a man wrapped in dynamite blowing himself up in a Sudbury bank, all of these have psychological proximity for the reader or viewer, wherever he or she may be.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, violent news, like stories in all other categories of newsworthy information, can be genuinely important to know about. When it is, and when its importance is coupled with inherent qualities of immediacy and interest, as we have seen, there is a further tendency for the media to overplay it in terms of its relative importance.

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1. A useful description of the concept of psychological proximity is provided in Cole, Richard and David Grey, "The Nature of News -- Traditional Concepts", Handbook of Reporting Methods, Maxwell McCombs, Donald Shaw and David Grey, eds. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976, pp. 303-4.

Our hypothesis that violent information tends to fit almost perfectly the news person's intuitive perception of what constitutes news, and therefore may be overplayed, is powerfully supported by our interview data. In response to the fourth question seeking to know the sorts of news situations which would trigger maximum utilization of newsroom resources, the scenarios described to us were, without exception, violent and dramatic.

In fairness, it must be pointed out that four interview subjects described scenarios in which violence, though clearly implicit, was not necessarily of a direct and physical nature. A Toronto editor, for instance, suggested that the unanticipated resignation of a prime minister, pressed by powerful political forces, would generate maximum resources mobilization in his newsroom. Such exceptions were rare, and the great majority of our interview subjects offered scenarios describing overt, physical violence. Some quite typical examples follow:

"I think generally spot news events of various kinds. It could be a race outbreak in Detroit, rioting or something like that. Or mentioning one locally, about 18 months ago a gunman took a couple of children hostage in a farmhouse east of the city (London)."

"Well, I think a sniping. Yeah. We've had a couple of them here (Peterborough) and they had everybody scrambling around."

"...a schoolbus accident. I don't know if you remember, but we had a serious schoolbus accident in Amherstburg (Windsor) eight or nine years ago, and there were eight children killed."

"Good things just don't seem to happen as traumatically as bad things. So specifically, it would have to be somebody escaping from jail, a murder, a bad car accident, some sort of tragedy."

"It's got to be the crime or disaster. Or some major political development in Canada. But I'm afraid it's the crime or disaster that makes us jump."

"I'd say blood and gore stories. I used to do surveys when I used to work for the radio station (the subject now works for a wire service). We used to go out on the street and talk to people, and it's so true. Those are the stories that really grab people -- where there's death, a lot of death. You know, more than one person killed. More than a thousand, preferably. An airplane crash..."

And so it goes. We were also interested that 27 of our interview subjects said, in response to our seventh question, that they believed most members of the reading and viewing audiences are likely to pay more attention to news items when they contain an element of tragedy or violence. The matter of the news person's perception of his audience is dealt with more fully elsewhere in this report, but it is important for our present purposes to realize that, when the reporter is writing the violent story, he believes he is writing

a story many members of the audience will read or view with careful attention. In his response to the seventh question, a London reporter gave us this insight: "When you write a story about a dull committee meeting, even though you might give it a gimmicky lead and make it as readable as possible and kind of bright and funny, I'm sure you don't get the readers that you do on a violent or sensational or racy story."

In Oshawa, a reporter told us people "most definitely" prefer violent news. "Violence gets people. It's not a nice thing to say, but it's true. A murder -- that will strike all kinds of people. They get interested. Somebody gets attacked or a woman gets raped, these things stir people up. You know, you look through history that the most fascinating people are the Hitlers, the Napoleons, the Al Capones, these fellows. Nobody wants to read about good people."

Perhaps nobody does want to read about good people; news people certainly seem to believe this is the case. We found, in response to our sixth question in which the interview subjects were asked to discuss the general criticism that violence may be unduly emphasized in the news media, that a solid majority, 18 of the total, objected, expressing the view in one way or another that most outside criticism of media violence content was unwarranted or unfair. (Ten felt the criticism was fair, and two were uncertain).

We found two main defensive themes in the responses: That news people are giving the public what it wants; and that news people are simply

describing the world as it really is, and critics are seeking to avoid reality. These themes, singly or in combination, were presented by 19 of our subjects at some point in their responses. A representative sample of pertinent portions from the responses follows:

"...we're only a mirror of society. We don't make the crime happen. We just report it."

"I think in many instances reporters and editors and television people do go after the sensational, but it's because they know that's what brings the readers and viewers."

"Well, it's not all peaches and cream out there. You might as well tell it like it is. It's out there, and they might as well be aware of it."

"...people have always criticized the bearer of bad news. It would be pretty irresponsible for the news media not to report crime and disasters and violence because it's part of life, part of our whole experience."

"Well, damn it, this criticism is probably being made by readers, and they just can't have their cake and eat it. The world's just on the edge of its chair watching, and it's our job to present this grizzly nonsense to them. Then they criticize."

If you don't know, or if it's not impressed on your mind that there is such a thing as crime, that there is such a thing as violence, and that the bizarre does happen, then what kind of shape are you going to be in when it ultimately happens to you?"

While the sixth question sought only to elicit general comments about violent news coverage, questions eight and nine were concerned with quite specific possible social consequences of violence reporting. In question eight, we asked our subjects to consider the possibility that media coverage of specific violent incidents might generate tragic imitations -- that the report of a subway suicide, for instance (now very rarely reported, incidently) might create a rash of such tragedies. In the ninth question, we were concerned with the possibility that some individuals and groups in the community may be unreasonably fearful of the potential for violence around them as a result of the magnifying effect that media emphasis or focus upon specific types of violence can produce. For instance, if the local media report two or three instances over a number of months of old people in the community being attacked and robbed, and then add wire accounts of similar instances from other communities as they occur, the possibility of such an incident occurring in their own lives may be intensified to an imagined probability in the minds of many elderly citizens -- to the point, perhaps, where they assume, quite incorrectly, that muggers lurk in every alley and doorway.

In the case of question eight,<sup>23</sup> of our subjects recognized the possibility of imitative behavior, but only a minority, 8, felt the press had any clear moral obligation in the matter. Among those who recognized a problem, but felt no special obligation, two themes tended to repeat themselves:

The cure, the non-reporting or downplaying of violent news would be a restriction on press freedom, and therefore worse than the disease; and that the downplaying or elimination of such news items, while possibly desirable in the one sense, would have the negative effect socially of producing wild rumor mills, and generating public accusations of news suppression by the press. A representative sample of the comments follows:

"I just cannot see how you can have a free press operating and have newspapers start playing a social role saying: 'We must play this down because of the possible result'. Now if you don't want a free press, if you want some kind of government control, that's an entirely different thing. But I think it's a price that has to be paid."

"...I agree that (a report of bizarre violence) does spark more things of the same nature. But the cure, which is censorship, is worse than the disease."

"If we (a Toronto daily) had downplayed this story (a shooting incident involving death in a Brampton, Ontario, high school) I think the community, especially the Brampton community, would have wondered why, would have wondered what was being held back or suppressed. The paper's credibility would have suffered if it had treated the story as less than the shocking event it really was."

"Such stories are going to spread anyway...in many ways there is less chance of folk legends being built up (making heros out of villains) by getting the facts out in the first place."

"We can't possibly try to second guess what any kook is going to do. We're not qualified to make that kind of judgement. And if we got into that, we would be censoring everybody's story that we ever put out."

Finally, these comments from individuals who did not see the imitative behavior problem as a question that need concern the media:

"I don't think if one story appears three days in a newspaper, and gets maybe a little extra coverage in television and radio, that it's going to be the sole factor that's going to cause a second skyjacking or a second school shootup. I think there are a lot of people who think that the press and the media have a lot more power than they really do."

"I don't think we have to apologize for covering a big news story. If it encourages somebody else to do the same, I don't view that as my problem. That's his problem."

Question nine dealt with the possibility that media attention paid to specific categories of violent activity may leave the mass audience, or groups within it, with the false impression that the violent activity in question is far more prevalent than it really is. We were most impressed at the outset with the fact that 9 of our interview subjects simply had not recognized or considered the possible existence of such a phenomenon. The great majority, 24, even if they recognized the theoretical possibility of the phenomenon, did not admit to its practical reality. Their

answers indicated that they believed the media to be providing the public with an accurate portrayal of the violence in its midst. Here are some of the responses we received:

"I don't think there can be too many young ladies worried about being raped. I don't think there can be too many little old ladies worried about being mugged, because these are real dangers in our society today."

"It's going to happen whether it's reported or not. Perhaps it's a good thing that if somebody's going to stalk the underground garage you should be prepared."

"In my experience, it's simply not true. In Toronto, where I live, I don't see any evidence that people are afraid to walk the streets at night because they're doing it. There's no area of Toronto that I'm aware of that people feel unsafe at night...So I'm really doubtful that the theory has any basis.

"...I'm not a sociologist, and I haven't done any surveys, but I don't buy the thing that people are holed up in apartments trembling, afraid to come out on the streets because of crime and underwear stories they read in the newspapers. I just don't think that it's true."

"The sociologists should read the stories about children playing on the streets of Belfast, totally ignoring the blood stains on the sidewalks and so on. They have simply grown accustomed to it."



### CHAPTER III

#### Perceptions: The News Person's World

A number of our questions sought to learn, either directly as their main theme, or indirectly in relation to other concerns, what news people think of themselves as human beings and as journalists; what they believe the world thinks of them; and how they view the work relations and the economics of the news business.

The answers were complex. Though our interviews yielded an abundance of insights, there were few dominant themes which one could conveniently isolate and describe as foundation blocks. Rather, there was a wealth of detail, and the selection and description of the most salient of these, which might collectively describe the journalistic mind, proved a difficult task. Something of a general overview did emerge, of course, and though such generalities are limited always in their analytical usefulness, at least this one provides the reader with a helpful orientation for the discussion that follows.

Our overview is of a rather melancholy landscape. In it, one sees, among other things, a peculiarly innocent cynicism struggling with an almost Quixotic idealism for possession of the journalistic mind; a detachment from society, an acute awareness of the journalist's non-participant status



as social observer that verges on shyness; a rather bitter sense of being unappreciated and misunderstood by the general public; and a sense (that has vague psychological overtones of martyrdom) that despite all the hardships, the work of the news person is very important to society and must be done.

Moving to the specifics of the exercise, we separated the information gleaned into three areas: The First involves perceptions the news person has about himself and his work; the second deals with the news person's understanding of the public, and his perception of the public's understanding of him; and the third treats some economic questions and aspects of newsroom work relations as these touch upon the news person's self-perceptions.

#### A. As They See Themselves

In our 24th question, we asked the interview subjects, in effect, to rank their jobs against other occupational roles in terms of their importance to society. We hoped the sorts of comparative occupations mentioned might reveal something of the collective self-image of the news person, and this did prove to be the case.<sup>1</sup> While collective impressions by no means apply to all individuals, in this case a very clear image

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1. Occupational scales of several sorts are standard tools in sociology, and our 24th question is really an adaptation of the concept. For an important Canadian occupational scale, and a discussion of its uses and limitations, see: Blishen, Bernard. "A Socio-Economic Index for Occupations in Canada." Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, February, 1967.

of the news person emerged as one who sees himself as an important, altruistically motivated social servant.

Most of our subjects categorized their work at professional levels in human service occupational areas. Five individuals chose not to answer the question (an interesting point which we will consider in due course) leaving 25 individuals producing 50 occupational relationships. Of these, 30 identifications were made with occupations in an arbitrarily established social service grouping consisting of teaching, the law, social work, medicine, politics, and professional service aspects of public service. The occupation most mentioned was teaching, with 15 of our subjects seeing a parallel between journalism and the work of the classroom. Seven of our subjects drew parallels between journalism and various business management functions, and, while these identifications with management are not especially significant statistically other than as a measure of the news person's relatively high sense of his occupation's ranked importance, we were interested to note that only one subject equated his work with that of the public relations executive, and no one drew parallels with any aspect of advertising. The balance of our responses were statistically unimportant, and ranged across a wide selection of individual possibilities including two mentions of blue collar occupations, and one of professional sport.

Clearly, the relationship between newsgathering and social service occupations is important as we begin to come to grips with the news person's self-image, but statistics tend to be rather barren, and a better sense of their meaning

in human terms is to be found in the words of the people we interviewed.

"Teaching, I guess that's one," a reporter told us. "I think the press offers an equivalent or comparable service to society as does the teaching profession." And another reporter offered this: "Well, I'd say teaching, and social work for another. Generally, those are the areas I identify with."

"Perhaps this sounds a bit pompous, but I think news people are valuable. A good reporter is like a good teacher, in a way. You are imparting knowledge, and hopefully people will learn from you." This from a young woman who does television reporting in Windsor, and from a man who writes for a newspaper in Northern Ontario: "Some type of counselling work, perhaps being able to deal with children. Social work, I guess."

Responses of this sort did not come from everyone, as the statistics we have cited indicate, but the theme was a very common one. We have mentioned the fact that five of our subjects refused to answer the question. This deserves a passing reference and explanation, as all five gave similar and rather idealistic reasons having to do with their disapproval of any view of society that allows or suggests rank ordering in any form. Here is a typical response from a copy editor in London: "Who's more important, a brain surgeon or a garbage collector? Well, if the garbage collector goes on strike

and the garbage piles up around the hospital, then the garbage collector suddenly attains a great deal of importance... I don't think there are parallels. It's like asking who's more important on a football team -- you can take one person away, and the rest of them are going to get their lumps and feel it." And in Oshawa, a reporter said this: "I don't buy this importance nonsense at all. I think as long as a person's doing something that's legitimate, they work hard at it, they give it their best -- I think that's all you can say about it."

In the fifth question, we asked our interview subjects if the business of newsgathering tended to set them apart from the mainstream of the population; whether it made them different from other people. Most of our subjects did perceive important differences, often rather unpleasant ones, and certainly quite extraordinary when placed in juxtaposition to the journalist-as-social-servant theme just described. In summary, our news people said these things about themselves: The news business makes its people cynical and callous, and it tends to desensitize them to the human origins of the stuff they call news (these concepts variously from 15 subjects); and it tends to make them cliquish among themselves but to some extent aloof from the general community (according to 14 responses). On a more positive side, eight people gave us some version of the notion that reporters are more realistic than most people; that they are keen observers and far better informed than the bulk of the population; and

that they serve as society's watchdogs when the rest of us are asleep or blinded to dangerous realities.

Dealing with these perceptions in the order of presentation, we were struck, perhaps not especially surprised, though, by the number of people in our interview group who felt handling news makes them more callous, more cynical about human behavior and motivation, than most people. The idea that news people should be cynical and callous is an ancient part of newsroom lore, but we felt there was a quality to the comments that went considerably deeper than an automatic expression of loyalty to a tradition. We found, for instance, that the subjects tended to be quite specific about the causes of this occupational syndrome. For some it was a callousness developed as a psychological shield against the shock of too frequently witnessing the reality of gross physical violence, or its aftermath. For others, it was a certain dry cynicism bred of too many years searching for chicanery and self-seeking behavior, and finding it, in too many ambitious people in and out of public life, In still others, and this was the saddest in a tragic litany, it was a generalized contempt, seemingly for all mankind, generated from observing patterns of human behavior ranging from fearful obsequiousness to lying bombast which most journalists discern after a very short time on the job in many of the people they must interview and write about.

These comments extracted from the interview responses to our fifth question are instructive. We begin with the entire

response of a Western Ontario television reporter: "I think it (the news business) makes him more cynical. We're conned and lied to by so many people. They're covering something up, they don't want you to dig too deeply, or worse still, they tell you something off-quote, and then you have to betray a trust in order to use it. Basically, I think the politicians are the big ones. They lie to you, switch their stories, or they may take half an hour replying to a question, and playing the tape back you find out they've said nothing."

This observation was from a woman reporter in Peterborough: "We tend to be slightly cynical. You come across so much that's going on every day, and so many people are hurting each other and doing so many bad things that you just accept it. You shrug and carry on."

These comments are typical, but we thought there was something especially noteworthy, poignant really, in the remarks of a wire service editor describing the psychological problems involved in writing about gross violence. He described callousness as a necessary defence mechanism, and cited as an example a newsroom conversation while his people were processing copy about a major air disaster in France. The crash took place in a wooded picnic area, he said, "and we were joking...wondering what kind of wine, red or white, the French would want to drink at this sort of thing."

"it's fairly morbid, morbid humor. But I suppose it's the only way. If we were to stop in the middle of our

shift and think about the immensity of 300 people just being consumed in a ball of fire, and really think about that, it's very easy to go to pieces over something like that. And we couldn't go to pieces. We had to get this story out." Elsewhere in his response to the same question, the same man told us, and equally perceptively, that life in its entirety can become a joke eventually to people who survive long careers in news work. "It all becomes a joke...the really better journalists at the end (of their careers) are tremendously brilliant satirists."

The second of our themes, that news people tend to become desensitized to the human origins of much of the news they write, could be described, like the phenomena of journalistic cynicism and callousness to which it is closely related, as a defence mechanism. It is a subtle concept, though, and we were rather surprised that a significant number of our interview subjects mentioned it quite specifically as a facet of greater or lesser importance of the journalistic self-concept.

Basically, desensitizing is a process of becoming inured through familiarity: The first motor accident, involving death, that a person witnesses shocks him to the bone; the second not quite so deeply; the third less still; and -- eventually -- the sight of such horror, the theory goes, leaves one emotionally untouched. People dying violently in motor cars, it might be argued, have something in common with astronauts on a third or fourth trip to the moon -- both groups are involved in matters of unremarkable routine.

Much has been written about the concept of the desensitized audience of news and other forms of mass mediated information but there have been few studies published on desensitization as a phenomenon touching the attitudes and self-perceptions of the writers and processors of news. For this reason, it seems especially worthwhile to offer here a selection of the comments we received.

A woman in Windsor, who was assigned by her organization for some period of time to cover police news, told us that she found herself, in time, falling into the habit of using police jargon as a part of a process of desensitization. "I found myself referring to fatals (violent accidental deaths) in an MVA (motor vehicle accident). And that mean't that somebody had died in a car. I thought about it, and thought this is ridiculous. That's a human being who died out there, and yet I'd become so detached it was just another fatal and an MVA."

In Toronto, an editor described an experience that he finds tends to repeat itself, of coming home with what are, to him, matter-of-fact items of news and gossip about their processing, and suddenly realizing he is shocking his family members in the retelling of them. "It's very hard to take anything seriously. I shock people by coming home... and I start telling this, that and the other thing, and they say 'My God, that's horrible'. And I guess it is horrible. You certainly notice that."

Not everyone used the word desensitization, of course, but the concept was implicit in a number of comments offered. An example of this came from an Eastern Ontario reporter who told us: "You don't react (to violent events) as emotionally as many of your friends would under the same circumstances. It's a matter of getting the facts, and then maybe afterwards you react."

The most impressive comment on the problem, and the final one we will offer here, came from a senior Toronto editor who is involved for his paper in the work of newspaper criticism. "I'm afraid the hard-nosed newsman becomes desensitized. The news is a commodity, and you learn to treat it very professionally. I mean, without any personal involvement. You lose a sensitiveness to what really matters in the community."

Though it has, perhaps, only a superficial bearing in this context, it was interesting that this individual also felt the desensitization process also produces long-term negative reactions in readers. "As I say, we treat news as a commodity. A story comes in about a politician who is embarrassed, and that's automatically a good story because the son-of-a-bitch is embarrassed. And we lose sight of the human meaning, and treat it professionally and skilfully as something that's going to intrigue readers. In a sense, it does. But it also leaves them unsatisfied, I think, with what we are doing. We're not really touching them in their own lives, in their own concerns."

The third theme, in this case really a cluster of colsely related self-concepts about the newsgatherer's personality, extracted from the responses to the fifth question, describes news people as cliquish among themselves, often obeying a powerful herding instinct, and yet quite set apart from the mainstream of society. In the social context, a number of our interview subjects described themselves quite frankly as loners and as non-participating observers. One person suggested news people are basically quite shy; while 14 others, as we have seen, suggested or implied that news people are socially detached.

The idea that news people tend to be exceptionally cliquish was best expressed for us by a reporter in London who described news men and women as people who "breath on each other an awful lot, particularly when they are in close proximity...covering a candidate...and that's a bad situation.

"The newsman who doesn't consort with his cohorts is branded an outsider. There's a certain fraternity amongst newsmen that goes beyond fraternity. You might call it incest, if you want to, and they pick up each other's ideas..."

Another reporter, a woman in Toronto, described her social life as being mainly with other journalists. "I suppose I'm

not very good at chit-chat," she said. "I like to get down to the nitty-gritty and talk about issues, and I don't really find many people who care to do that on the outside." She described people outside the news business as "the civilians."

Another of our reporters, a man in Sudbury, described the cliquishness of the news fraternity, and went on, most eloquently, to describe the obverse side of the coin, the detachment of many journalists in the broader social context.

"I don't want to sound snobbish, but you do become cliquish," he said. "I don't think there is any place that can be as exhilarating or as boring as the press club." Then he went on to describe the other aspect this way: "They (the journalists) are on the sidelines, so close to the action, people rushing past on either side, and they get a real vicarious rush out of it. I've got a little theory that basically shy people become reporters. It's their way of getting in on the action."

Many of the others we interviewed alluded to, or described quite directly, the news person as the detached, non-participating observer of society, often a social loner. Perhaps the idea was most succinctly stated by a reporter in Peterborough who offered this sad little aphorism: "I think it's true, an observation made by a teacher I once had, that the newsman's only true friend, the only real friend he can have, is his wife. And even she watches what she says."

A number of the people interviewed not only recognized the detachment phenomenon, but saw it as a necessary virtue in news people. An editor in Windsor explained it this way: "You can't really have a lot of close friends in the community, because one of these days you're maybe going to have to step right on a close friend's toes. You tend to be, perhaps in that aspect, a little inbred in that your close friends and the people you talk to every day are other news persons. I don't know whether it's good or bad, but obviously in these days when you are supposed to keep yourself aloof and free from any connections in the community that could distort your news judgement, you don't have a lot of friends in the community."

Clearly, this man sees something of a virtue in the fact of journalistic detachment, and this despite the obvious pitfalls of its leading to desensitization and cliquish "incest" and all the rest. And he is right in that a very positive argument can be made to suggest that detachment is necessary, to some degree at least, if the news person hopes to approach his work fairly and objectively. One would have some justifiable cause for concern, for instance, if one's daily allotment of political news was being reported by a dedicated and involved member of this or that political party. Be that as it may, the important point to be made in this present context is that most of the news people we interviewed tended to see, if not virtue, at least necessity in most of these facets of the journalistic self-image which we have

described. One is obliged to admit, that when viewed in a certain context, desensitization, for instance, may mean the retention of sanity; or that cliquishness and detachment may be the unfortunate but necessary handmaidens of integrity. One can't help but believe there must be alternatives with fewer negative aspects, however, and some possibilities are discussed in the concluding chapter.

For the moment, however, it is important to recognize the existence of a number of facets to the existing journalistic self-perception which must be seen mainly in a positive light, provided the self-image is a true reflection of substance, and, of course, there is no guarantee of this.

The most outstanding of these positive facets is that the news person believes himself to be extremely well informed about his community and his world -- vastly more so, in fact, than most of his fellow citizens. Closely associated with this idea, it becomes very clear from our interview data that news people see themselves as being not only very well informed, but possessed of an ability shared with no one outside the craft to observe society keenly, dispassionately, pragmatically, and completely. Whether or not the self-image is valid in these closely related regards, the news people we interviewed strongly and universally believe it is. So much so, in fact, that these facets are clearly at the very core of the newsgatherer's fond notion that he or she is a member of a unique fraternity.

There was no individual in the interview group who did not make some allusion to, or specific statement about, these aspects of the self-image. A selection of their comments, extracted once again from the responses to our fifth question, follows.

In Oshawa, a reporter summarized it this way: "A reporter tends to become a real observer of the world at a very concrete level. Now, that's different from someone else who could be a participant at a concrete level. The reporter, in my opinion, seems to be able to get more of a grasp of things that are going on in the real live world of the average citizen." And in Toronto, another reporter explained that a reporter is frequently privy to more or less confidential information, much of which may never see the light of print or broadcast. "This gives you, I think, a unique kind of background to everything that happens in the world around you, and probably sets you apart from people who have nothing to do with the news business."

In Sudbury, a reporter who covered city council explained matter-of-factly: "...it's the local political scene in which I am far more knowledgeable than Joe Q. Public." Rather romantically for a young woman reporter in Toronto: "A newsperson wants to be sort of in on things as they are happening, and you have a better chance...it's still exciting to be in on the beginning stages of a story, when you find out something has happened before almost anyone else has."

The most perceptive comment, perhaps, was from a senior newspaper editor in Western Ontario: "You (the reporter or editor) know some things that a lot of other people don't know, you are aware of things developing in your community that have perhaps not been made public yet. You know of personalities who react in certain ways; you know that predictably certain people will say certain things and mean other things. Yeah...I think you're a person apart, especially in these latter days when editors are supposed to keep to themselves, isolated from the community really."

While this cluster of facets of the news person's self-image which generally pertain to his or her knowledgeability are clearly positive, as we have said, there are problems involved which the news people themselves perceive, and which we mention here in passing.

A senior television newsman told us: "I suppose in terms of seeing the world unfold, we are a little apart. I think it is important not to set yourself too far apart, though. You risk becoming arrogant and ver all-knowing." Finally, we had this from a television reporter which would seem to require no elaboration: "You have to pretty much keep in tune with what is going on around you; know enough not to appear like a complete fool when you're dealing with a subject that you don't know anything about."

## B. Relating to the Public

Most news people believe the public grossly misunderstands them, misconstruing by warped stereotyping the very nature of the news person's personality and the motivations he brings to his work; and misunderstanding to a point of total ignorance the nature of newsgathering and news production processes. Fully 25 of the people we interviewed offered strong statements which might be summarized by this sort of collective generality, a phenomenon which is certainly one of the most singularly interesting to emerge from the entire study. The problem is discussed at some length in the concluding chapter, and our purposes at this point are more descriptive than analytical, but it is not out of context to offer this observation that of all the human stories news people research and write, the most neglected is the one about themselves. What is even more troublesome is that the problem seems not to be a recognized one; if the public has an unfortunately stereotyped view of news people, then that is the public's fault, and something news people must suffer with stoic silence. One can go further and note that rarely in the interview data is there any suggestion that aspects of the stereotype might come uncomfortably close to reality, and thereby constitute an appropriate cause for concern among news people.

The 25th question was rich as the source of most of the insights we gleaned in this matter of the news person's

perceived relationship with the public. In it we asked, quite simply, for each subject's view of the notions the public has of a news person's work and role in society, and for the subject's perception of the fairness and accuracy of this view.

The dominant theme emerging was that the public simply does not understand at all. Though the word "martyrdom" is never used, and would be too strong in any event, something of the concept is certainly implicit in many of the answers we received. One senses that the news person feels he must do what he perceives to be his important and socially useful work despite what he also perceives to be a public misunderstanding that frequently imputes tarnished motivations to him, and not infrequently, downright anti-social ones. A selection of comments excerpted from the interview responses to the 25th question follows:

"They (the public) see us as sort of second-class private eyes, digging into other people's business and not very nice people. I don't really think the public has any idea at all of what we do." (This from a woman television reporter in Peterborough.)

"I often feel that the public looks upon us as a bunch of clowns floundering around looking under doormats and through keyholes. I don't think the public realizes the really serious attempts we've been making in recent years to upgrade the type of people who come into the newspaper

business." (This from an editor in Windsor.)

Another reporter in Peterborough told us: "I don't think the public has a single clue what we do. I get asked things daily which no reporter would do, and which the people asking should know better. I'm asked...you know...there are a great many people around who still think we can be bribed."

In London, a newspaper copy editor said of the public: "They consider that the newsman's function in society is to snoop, to report on private conversations...In general, I don't think the public has got any more than a scintilla of an idea of what the whole business is about other than the fact that they get the newspaper on the doorstep in the morning."

And a reporter in Toronto said this: "Some people seem to think that reporters are sort of nasty people who are always looking for ways to embarrass people, to get them into trouble. Some people are afraid of them (reporters). Others just hate and resent them, think they are intruders, think they twist things out of proportion and out of context. I think that by and large this is unfair and untrue. I think reporters try their best to be fair in whatever they say or write."

This is the view of a newspaperman in Oshawa: "Everybody thinks a reporter is out to get them. Whenever you call, people just shudder when you identify yourself as being from the press. They don't realize that we're people just like them;

that we're trying to do a job, and if they give us fair and honest answers, most reporters will do the job properly like any other professional."

Finally, as something of a minority report, this one comment -- the only one we received in this context that was genuinely critical of press performance -- from a Toronto reporter: "I think there's still a very considerable number of people who take everything seriously that they read in the paper or hear on radio or watch on television... You know, I don't think that's a very useful thing to do... They (the public) don't understand the business, and it's probably just as well, because if they did understand us, they wouldn't believe anything they read."

Another theme, closely related to the general notion of public misunderstanding, is the concept expressed by 15 of the interview subjects, that members of the public are fearful of news people and news organizations. Without elaborating, we offer several excerpts, again from the responses to the 25th question, which express this quite widely-held view:

"Oh yes, they're afraid of newspapers. Afraid of the publicity. Like backing into a buzz saw, you know. People are shocked when they see themselves in print, and especially when they see themselves in print in some difficult or embarrassing situation which frequently happens." This was the opinion of a senior Toronto newspaper editor.

And this interesting view was offered by a reporter in Sudbury: "In certain levels the reporter is tolerated only because he is feared. I'm thinking particularly of political levels. I think the politicians in general -- there are exceptions -- but in general I think politicians at all levels would just love it if the reporters would just go away. But because they are fearful of not answering questions and so on, they tolerate and sometimes woo the reporter, although instinctively they think of him as an adversary."

We also thought this comment from a reporter in Windsor was perceptive: "A lot of people think that as soon as they appear on television or are quoted in a newspaper, there's a giant neon sign going to go up over their house saying: 'Joe Blotz who lives on such-and-such a street was quoted in the newspaper tonight!' They're afraid of the publicity. They think the whole world now knows they exist."

Despite the fear, and the essentially negative misunderstanding, which news people perceive as being central to the public view of them, most of the people we interviewed were also convinced that most members of the public see newsgathering as exciting, romantic and glamorous. This notion was offered by 21 of the subjects, though most also saw great irony in it. Their perception of the reality of news work, which they felt the public does not see, is days, weeks, and months of boring routine for every rare moment of genuine excitement -- not unlike the apocryphal airline pilot who described his work as months of incredible boredom

punctuated by seconds of sheer terror.

Here, in its entirety, is an assessment of the routine of newsgathering and processing offered by the news director of a major Western Ontario television station: "I think most of the public think that we are somehow in the glamor business because we meet important people and get to appear on television. Somehow the view grows up that this is a glamor job, well-paying, easy hours. Well, it isn't, you know. For every important person that it is a real pleasure to meet, there are a lot of people that it isn't a pleasure to meet. And for every spectacular story that really turns the journalist on, there are two or three which are done because you've got to do them and they're not very spectacular and some of them aren't even very bloody interesting."

In Sudbury, a television reporter said this: "I think they (the public) see our profession as very glamorous, a lot of, you know, the movies type of thing. I don't think they know anything at all about the drudgery of sitting six hours in a meeting to come out with a two-minute summary."

And in Toronto, a reporter told us the public's understanding of the news person's work is "far, far over-glamorized and distorted. You know, basically, a reporter goes through a lot of drudgery, sitting through endless meetings, sifting for information through scores of phone calls and interviews. By far the majority of the job involves just plain hard slugging..."

C. Economics and Work Relations

A handful of our questions sought information which might be considered economic in nature, even though this study clearly does not concern itself with the fundamental economics of the newspaper or television industries in any way. Their purpose, rather, was to provide such insights as they might into the attitudes news people have about their workplace environment. We felt these might be revealing of the general understanding news people have of themselves, and though relatively little of a statistically important nature emerged, the commentary was frequently interesting.

For instance, not much is to be learned from the fact that, in response to our 23rd question on salaries, 12 people interviewed pronounced themselves satisfied with their rates of pay, while 18 claimed dissatisfaction. One presumes the approximate ratio would hold true in any number of other occupational groupings. We felt it was interesting, however, that eight of the people interviewed, a group which included some of those satisfied and some dissatisfied with their wage packets, felt industry salary levels were inappropriately low relative to salaries paid in occupations outside journalism, but traditionally filled by experienced news people. Such occupations include work in corporate and institutional public relations, in government as ministerial assistants and the like, and in college and university teaching. Salary prospects (if not beginning rates of pay) can easily range beyond \$25,000 per year in any of these occupational areas. Journalism salaries in Ontario begin at a relatively high \$8,000 to \$10,000 per year for

junior reporters on all but the smallest newspapers where they are much lower, but peak out relatively low at about \$16,000 per year for reporters with five years experience or more employed by the highest-paying newspapers in the province, those in Metropolitan Toronto. Some editors of newspapers do better, but editors' salaries at \$25,000 are extremely rare. Salary ranges are generally lower in television, especially in operations outside the Toronto, London and Windsor markets -- this despite the much-publicized cases of occasional news announcers who are paid at extraordinarily high levels for their value as audience-attracting personalities.

Journalism salaries, while hardly generous, are not outrageously low; rather, the problem lies in the fact that they are not competitive with those of occupations which traditionally recruit from the ranks of the news fraternity. The situation discourages many seasoned news people, some of whom feel personally, if vaguely, cheated by their employers; and many more who feel the news business itself, and the public it ostensibly serves, are being cheated as too many of the best and most promising young recruits move on to more lucrative fields after a few short years in the newsroom.

One reporter in Sudbury expressed the problem this way: "More than half the good newsmen I knew when I started in the business (five years earlier) are no longer in the media. Do you know what they are doing? They are working for politicians, and as PR men for multi-national companies. The bucks just aren't in the media." A senior television news director told us his salary, exceptional though it is at about \$20,000, would jump

overnight to \$30,000 if he went to work in any one of several areas of government employment for which he is qualified.

"It's the executive assistant syndrome, and they are stealing a lot of our good people away."

We acquired a general impression that many news people feel, perhaps not shabbily treated by their employers, but certainly with no more than minimally necessary concern.

In the 29th question, we asked our subjects about support resources provided by employers to facilitate the newsgathering process. As with the question on salaries, the collective responses are not statistically significant -- 14 said these were adequate, and 16 said they were not. Again, it was the comments which impressed us, in this case with the sense that news people generally (and there are important exceptions) are so shabbily treated by their employers that many of our subjects seemed really not competent to answer the question.

We were told in one newsroom, for instance, by a reporter who felt that resources were more or less adequate, that there was only one company car available for reporters to use, but that the managing editor generally kept it for himself. We watched three hectic people, jammed into two small rooms in the attic of an ancient converted house, prepare both radio and television news for a Northern Ontario radio-TV operation. In another television operation, we were assured with enthusiasm that facilities were more than adequate, a point emphasized by the reporter we interviewed when she told us her station had just

acquired a portable video camera to record events in the community outside the studio -- the first such unit her newsroom had ever had. In another newsroom, superficially quite elegant, two-thirds of the modest space available was occupied by advertising personnel; and in another newsroom, a subject complained mildly that his paper's newsroom and modest clipping library are locked after 5 p.m. and on weekends, an economy measure which makes research and after-hours news coverage virtually impossible.

Nine people told us in different ways, but with obvious pride, that news people need few facilities, that an elderly manual typewriter and a desk were all any good reporter really needed. One reporter did suggest, however, that it would be helpful if he could get a bit of paper for his typewriter without having to ask the managing editor to unlock the supply cabinet, and another felt his chair might be more comfortable with a caster on its fourth leg to match those on the other three.

Statistically insignificant though it may be, a sentiment expressed by three of our interview subjects seems worth noting here. As one of the three put it: "Reporters have no status in their own organizations, no one trusts me with anything. If only there was some appreciation..." It may also be statistically unimportant, but fairness demands that we point out that three newsrooms which we visited in Ontario, those of the Toronto Star, the Windsor Star, and especially the London Free Press, were modern and obviously well-equipped.

Two of the comments on the reporter's status, however, came from these newsrooms.

Wistful might be the best word to describe the attitude most news people seem to have about the fact that their newsrooms, with few exceptions, rarely receive priority consideration of any kind in the allocation of available corporate funds. We were interested that a majority seemed quite accepting of this fact. In response to our 26th question, in which we sought to know whether news people considered their organizations to be businesses or public service organizations, we were mildly surprised that 17 subjects described their papers or television stations as businesses; seven said they were both; and only five described them as public service organizations.<sup>1</sup>

More surprising were the responses to the 27th question in which we asked if advertisers had any subtle or obvious influence on the operation of the newsroom. Only four people said it would be possible for an advertiser to directly and overtly influence news content, but this number increased to 17 who felt at least subtle advertiser influences of various kinds were present. Only 13 said advertisers could not directly influence news content in any way.

One subject in this latter group explained: "Advertising influence is just not effective. There are advertisers who still try to apply it, but they don't succeed. They need the newspaper really more than the newspaper needs them." This individual works

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1. One response to the 26th question was lost due to a technical problem in tape recording. The sample for this question was therefore reduced to 29.

for a Metropolitan Toronto newspaper. In the newsroom of a small television station, however, we were told that advertisers easily acquire free and favorable publicity. "They'll whisper in our (advertising) salesman's ear, or the station manager, or whoever, and a little note will float its way down...just to make you aware that this film possibility is there. And around here, everybody jumps when such a note comes down."

A reporter for a small newspaper in Eastern Ontario said advertisers have a definite influence. "Here they take the word of the advertiser as God. The advertising is important. It pays the bills." And another reporter told us succinctly, if rather unimaginatively: "You just don't bite the hand that feeds you."

We had difficulty disagreeing with one editor who suggested some forms of advertiser influence are morally appropriate. He said: "Let me put this reservation in. If you've got an advertiser who's paid \$5,000 for half a page in your paper, and let's say he's (a major airline) and he's advertising a new charter service to the Bahamas. Now, I don't think you'd be fair to that advertiser if you put on the top half of that page stories about three major air crashes that day." Fair enough, but perhaps a question of degree is also involved.

Finally, we were interested to learn, outside the context of the interviews, but confirmed by two sources, that senior executives, including senior editors, employed by an important chain of newspapers receive bonus payments each

year based upon their newspapers' profitability. Profits come from advertising revenues. One participating editor told us this sum, mainly in the form of pension benefits and the like, can increase his gross salary by as much as 30 per cent.

## CHAPTER IV

### Ethics, Responsibility and Regulation

Codes of ethics abound in the news business.

Most newsrooms have at least one of them framed and hanging where occasionally it might catch a journalistic eye. Several major wire services have produced such documents, as have a number of major newspapers and networks. Various organizations in the industry, ranging from the American Newspaper Guild (the journalists' union in the United States and Canada) to the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers' Association have produced their versions, too, and all speak in glowing generalities of the news person's moral rights, duties and responsibilities. Several such codes are included in Appendix C of this report.

Unfortunately, the common flaw of all such documents is that they are far too general to be of practical use as guides to news people in dealing with the moral specifics of their work. The Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers' Association at the time of writing was preparing such a code, and one senior Ontario editor who has seen it in draft form told us: "It's a motherhood thing. Otherwise it would never get past the CDNPA." (This was offered in a conversation outside the context of the research interviews.)

Within the context of the interviews, however, in the 14th question, we asked news people for their understanding of the ethics of newsgathering -- for their determination of what does, and what does not, constitute "good taste"; what sorts of information might be considered "taboo", or unpublishable, from an ethical standpoint.

From the responses, we learned several things. Most notable, perhaps, was the fact that not one of our interview subjects made any reference to any established code of ethics of the sort described above. However, 22 of the subjects did, in their responses, indicate a concern for ethical standards in the business. Furthermore, they expressed the belief that standards do exist, at least in the unwritten and informal sense, and that these are adhered to by a great majority of news people.

The problem is one of vagueness and lack of direction. It became quite apparent that ethical questions tend to be resolved on an ad hoc basis by individuals acting alone, and only rarely in consultation with colleagues. The overview from the interview material was of a scattering of ethical pot sherds, with each individual selecting his or her own bits and pieces, but only a few fragments receiving general recognition as parts of a whole. Several people with whom we talked recognized this general vagueness and lack of cohesion. A reporter in Sudbury told us: "I think they (the standards) are probably unwritten, and they all come down to that undefinable thing of

good taste and concern for your fellow man. I don't think there's anything you can sort of write down. It depends on the calibre of the people and the individual medium."

"What guidelines are there?" another reporter asked. "Only your own. You have to establish your own."

We found that while the general notion of the desirability of ethical behavior was present in the comments of virtually everyone interviewed, the articulation of specific principles was inevitably laborious and hesitant. Apart from the expected shibboleths having to do with the need for accuracy and fairness in reporting, and the rather dubious traditional obligation of honor not to reveal sources, only one statistically significant theme emerged as expressed, in one form or other, by 11 of our interview subjects. It had to do with the notion that people involved in tragic or embarrassing circumstances must be protected where the publication of names and details will serve no useful community information purpose.<sup>1</sup> Suicides; victims of criminal activity, and even the perpetrators of crime in some instances; persons discovered in sexual activities contravening social norms; persons involved in manifestations of aberrant behavior caused by alcoholism or emotional breakdown -- all of these were mentioned by various of our interview subjects

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1. Even the apparently wide acceptance of this theme is offered with some hesitation. The interview subjects, or some of them at least, may have been prompted to some extent by the phrasing of the 14th question.

as situations where names, and even descriptions in detail of the events, normally would be withheld for humane reasons. "Normally" is the operative word here. No story is ipso facto unprintable, and where a story is deemed to be of public importance or to be of extensive public interest, names and details will be published and broadcast. There are no hard and fast rules, but one reporter described what would seem to be a fairly widespread guideline in these rather colorful words:

"Suicides we don't handle unless they occur in public. If a guy takes a header off the clock tower in the (Peterborough) Market Square at high noon in the middle of a crowd of people, we'll use it. If a guy blows his brains out in his basement, forget it." The same sentiment seems to apply to all essentially private moral embarrassments and tragedies.

An editor in Western Ontario used these measured words to describe the guidelines: "Good taste is an important aspect of news. There's no legal restriction as far as I know that you can't use the name of a rape victim, but we haven't done it for many, many years. Surely nothing is to be gained by putting her name in the papers so that for the rest of her life she's going to be marked as a woman who was raped..."

The same editor did draw the line, however, at questions of aberrant behavior among people in public life, or entrusted with some important social responsibility. "Perhaps not from a bedroom point of view, if you like, but any other kind

of...activity...Drunk driving, I think, is one place.

A guy who is in a responsible position should know better than to go out and get nailed for drunk driving...

"If a prominent person is involved and convicted in some kind of sex perversion, I think the public should know about it...that this is the kind of man this guy is. Of course, if it comes to the business of illegal activities such as fraud or theft, I feel very strongly the public should know about it."

Apart from the general sense that news people should behave in a broadly ethical manner, and the single rather more specific guideline just described, there was little agreement among the people we interviewed as to what constitutes the chapter and verse of a code of ethics. We received many interesting ideas from many individuals, but there was little common currency. Apparently news people don't share ideas in this area with each other to any extent. One editor noted, for instance, that the media have a bad habit of printing the names of people involved in criminal charges, but rarely bother to print the information, perhaps six months later, when the courts have found such people not guilty. A reporter was distressed that the media were, in her view, often less than humane in treating criminal news where the individual involved is manifesting apparent symptoms of mental disorder. Another reporter felt that the media occasionally sensationalize criminal news to the point where

cases are judged in the press before they ever come to trial.

One individual felt an ethical convention was needed to guarantee sympathetic treatment of the physically handicapped; another felt a code would be useful to guide reporters on the degree of detail which should be included in descriptions of accidents -- his concern being with regard to the effect an over-abundance of detail might have on a victim's family and friends. And still another individual felt some restraining guideline would be appropriate to govern the use of swear words in print and broadcast.

Finally, we were especially interested in a comment which, in the case, came in different forms from three of our interview subjects. Their collective point was that such restraints as may be exercised by newspapers in the coverage of news in print tend to disappear in the photographic presentation of information. We were told of one example where a newspaper in Western Ontario printed a photograph showing, in detail, how young school vandals were manufacturing a crude form of incendiary device. Two other reporters, in different communities, expressed doubt as to the social value of a sequence of photographs used by many newspapers throughout North America in 1975 showing a woman falling to her death from a collapsing tenement fire escape in Boston. The point made was that the photos had no apparent value beyond the crudest form of sensationalism.

Ethical systems presumably derive logically from broader philosophic fundamentals, and it would seem to follow naturally that vagueness and uncertainty about the tenets of an ethical system must be symptomatic of vagueness and uncertainty about greater principles. In the case of the press, the wellspring of newsroom ethics must be the grand concept that press freedom is a necessary prior condition of liberal democracy, and it is distressing to find that the great majority of our interview subjects were as vague about the nature, purpose, and associated responsibilities of this ancient freedom as they were about a systematic approach to ethics.

The literature, of course, abounds in definitions and interpretations of freedom of the press. These range from such traditional landmarks -- (which surely ought to be basic reading for all journalists) -- as Milton's Areopagitica of 1644 and the definitive 19th Century essays of John Stuart Mill, especially his On Liberty, to a very rich body of 20th Century material which attempts to interpret the concept of press freedom for modern society.<sup>1</sup> Not one of our interview subjects made any references to these sources, ancient or modern, in response to our 15th and 16th questions seeking a definition of press freedom and its associated responsibilities.

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1. For a succinct but thorough survey of the literature on press freedom, the reader is referred to Siebert, Fred S., Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm, Four Theories of the Press. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1956.

The people we interviewed seldom were hesitant in providing answers, and, indeed, there was considerable agreement among them as to what constitutes press freedom. The answers were almost universally simplistic, however, and tended to interpret press freedom very narrowly as relating to the news person's own personal liberty, his safety, really. There were very few responses which recognized in any clear and specific way the broad social significance of free information flow. No one identified or discussed press freedom as a right, not specifically, or even primarily, of the journalist, but of the society at large and the individuals in it.

Fully 23 of our interview subjects described press freedom as being able to write on any subject, within the constraints of the law regarding contempt of court and libel, without fear of personal reprisal or harrassment of any kind. This was the single most dominant point. Fairness, truth, and accuracy, as these may be understood by individual journalists, were the only recognized moral restraints on the process; there was no mention of any concern for individual or social consequences of publicity.

It was striking that, in the context of the 15th and 16th questions, 18 of the people interviewed expressed fear about the intentions of government at all levels with regard to press freedom. This suspiciousness

of government, which is certainly healthy enough to a degree, seems to be something of an obsession that tends, perhaps, to blind news people to other threats. Only one person spoke in the context, for instance, of other, often more subtle, infringements of press freedom such as those imposed by the very sophisticated and highly manipulative public relations processes of private enterprise and large social institutions.

The best understanding of the news person's ideas about press freedom comes from his own words on the subject. A representative selection of comments excerpted from the interview material follows.

The succinct comment of a Toronto editor: "What's it mean to me? It means the right to publish the truth without interference from the state."

Also in Toronto, a wire service reporter described the concept this way: "I guess just what it says, the basic right to be free, to tell people what's going on. That's really hard to define. It's more of a feeling than anything..."

In London, a copy editor said: "We are at liberty to report on anything that politicians say, do, actions they take. And this is one thing, you know, that you can't do in many countries."

Finally, this comment from the one individual, a reporter in Windsor who recognized the existence of threats from sources other than governmental ones: "It (press freedom) is one of those things that in theory is there, but in practice I don't always think so. Most organizations...just give you what they want you to have. Unless you can afford to have on staffpeople who do nothing but research or investigative reporting,

you very often are not privy to the information that would make a good story."

In the 16th question, we asked news people about the responsibilities associated with press freedom, and again the answers received were characterized by their simplistic nature. The problem of vagueness and hesitancy in response, which we have seen described in relation to the 14th question, were again present in the responses to the 16th question. For the most part, the answers emphasized the need for fairness and accuracy in reporting (15 responses); and honesty (7). These qualities in reporting are clearly desirable, of course, but the general lack of any more substantive notions about press responsibility was depressing. News people leave the impression that they give very little thought to the nature of their community information role and the responsibilities it entails. The following excerpts are typical of most of the responses we received:

To a reporter in Oshawa, responsibility is "to present things in a fair and accurate manner." A television news director in Sudbury said: "Truthful, factual reporting. That's the name of the game. That's the criterion." In Peterborough, a television reporter told us much the same thing: "I think the important responsibility is to get the facts straight... There can be many, many sides (to a story). Find out what they are and print as much of the truth as possible."

Finally, a copy editor in London said "honesty" was the one-word answer to the question. He added "...in the same

society which guarantees freedom of the press there is freedom of opinion on the part of the viewers or readers. A newspaper which wants for one reason or another to pull the wool over readers' eyes on a certain issue isn't going to get away with it."

The general picture provided by these examples is hardly impressive, but, as with the case of the 14th question on ethics, a number of isolated individual comments indicate the presence of some depth of thought on the question of responsibility, even though as a group news people have difficulty articulating anything approaching a useful, commonly-held body of thought on the subject. Here are some of these individual notions:

A reporter in Toronto was alone among his colleagues in offering this important idea: "There's a different kind of responsibility, one involving the dissemination of as complete an account of what happens in the community as possible. It is in the coverage of events that aren't particularly spectacular, I think in this area the media don't live up to their responsibilities."

In Western Ontario, a television news director expressed concern that in their anxiety to acquire information, news people may lack in common courtesy. "Another thing we ought to show is restraint," he said. "We shouldn't be seen falling all over ourselves to intrude on the privacy of others. We should show that we can have a little dignity, too."

A young woman who writes for a newspaper in Eastern

Ontario had this worthy thought: "We should be more humanitarian. There's a responsibility not to destroy someone or some group or some cause simply to get it in there and make a headline." And in a similar vein, this from an editor in London: "Our responsibility is to provide information in the public interest without unnecessarily destroying or disrupting something of worth in society."

Several reporters made the point that over-writing is a temptation that faces all journalists, and there is an important responsibility to resist this anti-social compulsion. "I think there are quite a few reporters who tend to do a little bit of creative writing when they put a piece together," one reporter told us. Another put the problem this way: "I think the media try to live up to the concept or idea of accuracy, but it's very difficult. You have to write in such a way that often you really have to work the facts to make them more interesting, and I suppose in a sense that's overplaying something."

Vagueness and superficiality again characterized most of the responses we received to questions 17 and 18 on methods of public feedback into the news dissemination process and their adequacy. A third ingredient, however, which might be described as truculence, hostility even, replaced vagueness as a quality characteristic of responses to questions 19, 20, 21 and 22 which introduced ideas of various sorts of and degrees of public media controls. Unfortunately, the superficiality remained throughout.

In response to the 17th and 18th questions on existing methods of public redress and feedback into the news dissemination process, and their adequacy, virtually everyone we spoke with said there were three methods of complaint: Write a letter; place a telephone call; or drop down to the office and knock on the editor's or news director's door. And again, virtually everyone we spoke with felt these methods were entirely adequate.

A number of people pointed out that the law protects individuals and groups against the worst of media excesses and, perhaps significantly, only two individuals suggested the avenue of formal complaint to the Ontario Press Council or one of several local press councils functioning in the province.

Of course, there were exceptions, and as has been the case at several points in this chapter, the exceptions are worth describing in some detail. Prominent among these is the approach taken to reader involvement by the Toronto Star, as described to us by several Star writers included in the interview sample.

A senior editor of the newspaper serves as an "ombudsman", concerning himself with his paper's relationship with its readers. His duties include writing a periodic column which addresses problems specific to the Star, and more generally to the broader state of journalism. The Star also maintains a "bureau of accuracy" which, if nothing else, at least provides an office and a focal point of sorts for reader

concerns and complaints within the newspaper's rather gigantic organization. Finally, there is a practice at the Star of selecting stories from the news pages, and sending them to individuals directly or indirectly involved. These people are asked to comment upon the accuracy, emphases, and general appropriateness of the stories.

Admirable though these devices may be in theory, control in each case is held firmly within the Star organization. Readers and the community at large are involved in no way in their operation, and without such input, the usefulness of such devices clearly is limited. The response of one Star staff member to the 17th question follows, in part, and indicates that the program has at least some impact upon the newsroom; unfortunately, his comments also reveal the difficulties involved in any system which allows an individual or organization to sit in judgement on its own actions:

"...we run a bureau of accuracy here into which readers make their complaints about something they feel is wrong with the paper. The complaint is thoroughly examined. If it is justified, a correction is run in the paper. If the reader just didn't understand, he is given a letter explaining the misunderstanding. If he's strictly disagreeing, and it's a question of opinion -- his opinion -- he has a full letters page in this paper, and we print about 400 letters a week..."

Unfortunately, such apparent concern rarely is visible elsewhere in the province, though there are a few other hopeful notes. In Sudbury, a television station has a weekly comment show in which the company president reads and comments upon letters he has received from viewers. And in a Western Ontario community, an editor offered a suggestion which

might be worth putting into practice. His point was that many readers are not skilled at writing or putting their thoughts on paper. "I've wondered sometimes if we shouldn't have someone here in the office who could help people to compose letters expressing their thoughts."

Unfortunately, however, the position of the reader or viewer in his relationship with most Ontario media would seem to be summarized best in these words from one of the editors we interviewed: "...if you don't like the way we've handled a story, boy, there's nothing you can do unless we've overstepped the legal bounds in which case you can sue us. But that's it."

As we have suggested, the superficial, and even cavalier approach, evident in so many responses to the two questions pertaining to existing and traditional processes of media-audience interaction turned to suspicion, occasionally to hostility, in the responses given to the sequence of questions raising possibilities of various forms of media content control and monitoring. Two questions, for instance, numbers 20 and 21, dealt with press councils. Question 20 asked, quite simply, for opinions about voluntary councils of the sort without any form of coercive authority, and of which Ontario has several operating examples. Question 21 asked news people how they would react if such bodies exercised some sort of binding authority, perhaps under legislation.

Statistical summaries of the responses to both these questions are revealing. It was disappointing, but not surprising in the case of the 20th question that 14 of the people

interviewed dismissed press councils in their present non-coercive form as being ineffective to the point of uselessness. It was surprising, however, that eight people, most of them television personnel, said they had little or no knowledge of the concept, and felt unable to offer useful answers. In the case of the 21st question, fully 22 of the people interviewed rejected the idea of press councils with any kind of binding authority, legislated or otherwise, while another seven said that while the subjection of the press to some form of citizen control might be acceptable, legislated control in any form would not be acceptable. Only one individual told us there would be merit in making the press accountable to some sort of public body, even one with authority derived from legislation.

A better sense of the meaning of these statistics comes from the words of the people interviewed. In response to the 20th question, a Toronto editor had this to say about press councils in general: "Ineffective. They don't do anything. I might add that any decision by a body like that, by its nature, would be a bit like the United Nations in a way. It couldn't be binding unless people agreed."

A reporter said this: "The idea is ridiculous. If somebody has a beef that he couldn't straighten out just by going to the person (news person) responsible, then chances are he has an ax to grind."

An editor in Western Ontario spoke more kindly about press councils, but he too had serious reservations; "I think they serve a useful purpose, but I'm afraid it's a very limited one. I don't think the public is convinced.

really, that it (the press council in his community) is any more than an organization for mutual protection..."

Another editor, also from Western Ontario, also damned the press council concept with faint praise: "I think they have a place, and can make a valuable contribution. I think where the failure is, and I'm not sure how we can cure this, is that the public don't use them enough. And very often I feel that the matters that do come to the press council are really inconsequential."

A benign indifference seems, therefore, to characterize press attitudes toward existing press councils without binding authority. The general attitude shifts considerably, however, at the suggestion that press councils might perform their work more effectively were they given real authority.

One reporter in London told us press councils could only work if they were given such authority, but he went on: "The whole concept of a regulatory body strikes at the very roots of freedom of the press. If we have to have one (a press council) it would have to have teeth, but I certainly wouldn't want to see it happen."

In Windsor, a television writer offered this sentiment: "I suppose I'm reacting like any good journalist ought to react, you know, the red flag goes up."

In Toronto, we met the one individual, a newspaper reporter, who felt there might be merit in having press councils

with real authority. But he felt such councils still would have little real impact upon press performance. "I think it would be good probably...but it would be almost as ineffectual as what we now have. I just can't anticipate the press council (with authority) making any decisions that would to any extent influence the behavior of newspapers or journalists. The council might order a paper to print a correction. Big deal."

Mistrust and hostility characterized most of the responses to the 22nd question asking about content control aspects of the work of the Canadian Radio and Television Commission, and the possibility of extending the CRTC's authority, or establishing a similar organization, to regulate newspaper publishing.

A statistical summary of the responses was developed. Of the 30 responses, seven were eliminated from the summary for reasons that either the subject clearly had insufficient knowledge about the CRTC to comment meaningfully, or because it was impossible to extract unequivocal opinions about the agency from the responses in question. We did not find, incidently, that ignorance and/or lack of opinion clustered among either television or newspaper personnel. Of the 23 subjects who gave responses containing clear opinions, 10 people said the commission does useful work in regulating television, while 13 were solidly opposed to all aspects of its work in the television environment. Twenty-one of the

people interviewed opposed the establishment of a CRTC-style authority over the print media; one other said this aspect of the question was irrelevant as the CRTC was not now involved in print regulation and it was, to him, preposterous even to consider the future possibility; one person saw the concept as a possibility.

Once again, it is necessary to go to the comments of the people interviewed to get at the real sense of these statistics. A wire service editor demonstrated the depth of the majority of his colleagues' misgivings about governmental regulatory involvement in the news processing function of any medium -- television, newspapers or radio. He cited a case of what he regarded as the most offensive sort of journalism practised by a Toronto radio station which had come to the attention of the CRTC at a license renewal hearing in January, 1976. "They played a tape of an extremely offensive newscaster called (name of broadcaster) who talked about a body found in a lake as a floater, and children dead in a fire as crispy critters, and this type of awful, in my opinion, really awful reporting."

The owner of the station was asked by the commissioners if he thought this was responsible journalism. "Well, in the event (owner's name) doesn't know what the hell he's doing at his radio station, I think the CRTC has a moral obligation to point out to him what they thought of the newscast."

The extent of this editor's misgivings about governmental regulatory involvement in news processing becomes starkly clear in his unwillingness to condone CRTC censure of even this sort of extreme and cruel journalistic irresponsibility. "...I think the CRTC had a moral obligation to point out to him what they thought of his newscast, but that's as far as it goes. They can't start telling him his newscaster can't write that stuff...I think the CRTC has far overstepped its bounds and somebody is eventually going to challenge the CRTC's authority in court and they're going to win. I guarantee it...they're just swimming along because nobody can stand up to them. But if somebody does, it's (the CRTC) just going to crumble like a house of cards."

A television reporter offered this, rather less dramatic comment: "It's such a powerful organization over what the broadcast media are doing...I don't think there has been a lot of trouble over what goes on in the news side of broadcasting, but I would be very frightened about the same kind of thing over newspapers. I'm not happy with it over television. It gives me the impression, I don't know, that there's something wrong...we've got this government body which holds the ultimate ax..."

And finally in this vein, another television reporter, this time in Sudbury, told us: "The CRTC wants to envision itself as God. It's very, very dangerous."

There were, as we have indicated in the statistical summary, a number of people who felt the CRTC was doing a necessary job. Usually, such comments came with caveats, however, as the following observation typifies: "The CRTC's primary concern should be simply restricting the number of broadcast outlets operating on or close to the same frequency. But I think the CRTC has extended its authority tremendously beyond the bounds that were really originally envisaged, and (is) getting into de facto editorial control of the broadcast media."

Finally, we offer this from a television reporter in Peterborough, one of the very few who saw good in CRTC concerns about quality and saw the possibility, at least, of newspaper regulation. "We definitely should have a watchdog because you can slip into sloppy habits. An awful lot of stations are more or less run by the sales department, and salesmen are not particularly known for their moral values. I don't know about newspapers. It might be a good idea, but they seem to have done a pretty good job of regulating themselves."

This comment, and a very few others in a similar vein, were clearly exceptions. News people as a group find the very suggestion of governmental involvement in regulating the quality of news dissemination sheer anathema. We found in the responses to the 19th question that the notion of the self-regulation of news personnel through formal professionalization fared little better.

The question raised the possibility of legislation to create enabling machinery that would permit news people to regulate themselves, much in the manner of the systems of self-regulation within which members of the medical and legal professions work. Of the 30 people interviewed, not one offered unqualified support for the proposal. Seven individuals offered qualified approval, but in each case with the reservation that even the sort of minimal arms-length government involvement implied would be a hazard to press freedom. Fully 23 people were unreservedly opposed. Their responses contained 15 objections to the principle of any form of governmental involvement; and 10 expressions of the view that the public interest is not protected by existing medical and legal organizations, and presumably would not be by an equivalent journalistic one.

Here again is a representative sample of the comments from which the above statistics are derived. A Toronto newspaper editor expressed his general objection in these words: "No, I wouldn't want to see any kind of license, because when you do that, you know, the freedom of the press is gone. The professional organizations you mentioned are on a different basis entirely. A doctor operates not under public scrutiny. He operates in private, in secret, and a lawyer does too. The newspaper operates under full public scrutiny...the only safe method of policing a newspaper is to let the public police it."

A reporter in Toronto offered this: "I would have no problem with such legislation. I think it would be every bit as inadequate as that governing doctors and lawyers. It would be a fine way to bamboozle the public into thinking there were some sort of controls even though there wouldn't be. There aren't any controls on doctors and lawyers now." (We assumed in the statistical assessment that this person was opposed to the principle.)

This comment came from a reporter in Oshawa: "Particularly because news people are dealing very, very directly with the political element, I would be very skeptical about the wisdom of allowing some authority that came from the province or from any other level of government to do this. I don't think it would work."

And finally, this from a reporter in London: "I'm against that for the simple reason that I think journalists should be a rag-tag bunch of people...I think that people they deal with should have a little bit of fear that they might be a little bit irresponsible, and therefore, particularly politicians and civil servants and so on, should watch their Ps and Qs when a newspaperman comes around..."



## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Suggestions

News people are not unaware that problems exist in their craft, that there are things they do, even traditions they hold dear, which do not always serve the public interest. They seem unable to move with firm and demonstrated resolve in directions of reform, however, a point which is not without irony as they have, especially in the past two decades, acted as a catalyst in the agonies of reform and reassessment in so many other social institutions.

Print and electronic journalists alike are almost always employees in the modern age, with little or no real power in the large family businesses and public corporations which employ them, and this may have a lot, or a little, to do with the problem. The American scholar-journalist Ben H. Bagdikian has pointed out that this was not always the case, that in the early 19th century when much of the body of liberal journalistic tradition was formulated, newspapers in his country were small businesses, few with daily circulations beyond 550 copies, and with one man (occasionally with a helper or two) acting as corporate policy maker, reporter, editorial



writer, printer-pressman, and delivery boy. Today, the journalist, even the news director or senior editor, is essentially an employee, and almost always removed from senior corporate policy making levels. Bagdikian makes this comment on the position of the latter-day news person as employee of the traditional family business: "There is... the genetic roulette every community is forced to play with its local paper. If the heir of the publisher, or his son-in-law, happens to be an intelligent and effective journalistic leader, the community receives a good paper. But if the heir happens to be incompetent, or becomes more interested in breeding bulls, the community will receive an indifferent paper." Bagdikian adds that distinguished journalism (and he might have added innovative journalism as well) requires distinguished leadership -- a matter of pure chance in the case of the family business, but a gamble in which he believes the odds become less than satisfactory when family newspapers pass into the hands of large corporations. Bagdikian's succinct comment is this: "The demands of corporate efficiency and of journalism are often at odds."<sup>1</sup>

In Canada, the record of publishers and television station owners in seeking to improve or change the processes of journalism is, in a word, awful. Many publishers will argue that they have invested enormous amounts of money in computer-related technology in very recent years, and while this is quite true, the new technologies may make news plants more cost efficient,

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1. Bagdikian, Ben H., The Information Machines. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1971. pp. 120-1.

but they have had little or no impact upon the nature or quality of newsroom output. The work of Senator Keith Davey and his Senate Special Committee on the Mass Media in 1969 and 1970 has had no measurable effect on journalism quality or conduct. Press councils, though not the high profile national body envisioned by Senator Davey, have been established in Ontario and several other provinces, and at the local level in a handful of Canadian cities as well. But the impact these have had upon the conduct of journalism, and the level of public awareness they enjoy, are both negligible. The journalists themselves, as the evidence of this study amply demonstrates, regard the councils with mingled indifference and contempt.

It seems unlikely that society can look to the publishers and owners for leadership in the admittedly risky (financially, at least) business of experimentation, innovation and ultimate change in the nature of journalism, and this leaves the working journalists themselves, and the state, as the remaining possible agents of change. The journalists interviewed for this study fear mightily the possibility of government involvement in their regulation, and often with very good reason, we feel. But the prospect of the journalists undertaking the task themselves obviously does not seem bright. Bagdikian quite correctly places the journalist in the follower-employee role which would seem to make very dim the possibility of serious and innovative leadership emerging from the ranks of the newsroom. At the moment, there is little to suggest that Bagdikian's assessment is anything but precisely accurate.

The journalists' largest organization, and their only one of any consequence, is the American Newspaper Guild. It, however, is unabashedly a union, and pays scant attention to questions of journalistic quality. Media Probe, a tiny publication in Toronto edited by Professor Earle Beattie of York University, is the only established journal of media criticism in Ontario, and it has but a token circulation among working journalists. Content, a monthly newspaper for journalists, also published in Toronto, has a wider circulation among news people, but from promising beginnings in 1970 under its founding editor, Dick MacDonald of Montreal, it has degenerated recently into little more than an industry news and gossip sheet.

What is most depressing, when one looks for signs of leadership among the journalists themselves, is that they tend either to reject most criticism out of hand, or to recognize its possible validity, but to respond with generalizations that place the blame elsewhere. This kind of thinking became abundantly clear to us in the process of doing the interviews, but moving outside their context, it seems especially well demonstrated by Borden Spears, the Toronto Star's ombudsman, in one of his columns:

"Whether or not they (the journalists) can persuade their readers of the fact, they know they are doing their honest best to portray the world as they find it. When they do, they meet the response that has always been accorded the bearer of bad tidings."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Spears, Borden, "The public trusts garbagemen more than newsmen". The Toronto Star. July 12th, 1975.

Spears was reacting to a Lou Harris poll of 1975 which indicated a significant decrease in the preceding decade in public trust in a number of occupational groups and institutions, including the press. He is probably right that many people today occasionally might like to assassinate the journalistic bearer of bad news; quite illogical, of course, and to complete the analogy which is one of Spears' favorites, not unlike certain ancient Persians who are said to have actually done in their unfortunate messengers. Spears is not alone among newsmen, most of whom love to use this analogy of the ancient messenger without admitting to the glaring logical non sequitur it contains; unlike his classic counterpart who merely grabbed the message given to him and ran, the modern news person does much to shape the content and to determine the priority of the message, and even to decide whether or not he will carry it at all. This suggests a responsibility to society which many news people seem not willing (or able) to understand.

Certainly, the widespread rationalizations and denials of responsibility will not lead to useful self-criticism and self-evaluation. And without these, state regulation tragically must come -- to fill a vacuum, if nothing else -- as it has come inexorably and inevitably to so many other institutions and aspects of Canadian life in recent decades.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Government is deeply involved in the regulation of broadcast media in Canada, of course, but it is the writer's contention that government is also involved in a substantial policy formulation process in a number of areas which is altering the position of the print media in Canadian society. The reader is referred especially to: Litvak, Isaiah and Christopher Maule, Cultural Sovereignty: The Time and Reader's Digest Case in Canada. Toronto: Burns and MacEachern, 1974.

The landscape is not entirely bleak, perhaps, and it is possible that the journalists themselves, given the right incentives, might act before the matter is out of their hands. While the interviews we conducted set in stark relief a lot of things that are very wrong, they also give repeated indications that at least a substantial minority among news people know that all is not well in the garden, and that at least they are uncomfortable about it. The implications of the Bagdikian hypothesis, of course, are that it is pointless to expect serious leadership from the newsroom as it is to expect it from the publishers and owners; in the remaining pages, however, we offer a few thoughts and suggestions which make the optimistic assumption that this is not necessarily the case.

#### 1. Rewrite the Definition of News

The world, and the people in it, do not move through time in a spasmodic chaos of unrelated crises and isolated "events". And yet, in the main, this is the way the world is presented to the community by the news fraternity. News people know this, but they are locked in a peculiar journalistic mold which demands that news be no more than a few hours old; that it be close to home, psychologically if not physically; and that it be "interesting", in effect entertaining, to the reader or viewer. Only after news meets these criteria is its importance to society in absolute or historic terms considered. Everyone knows that his or her own life, most of the time, is a process that moves through time in an intricate series of cause and effect relationships. Why, then, should an audience be asked

to accept as reality a distorted portrait of the world that consists of isolated and fragmented events, crises, more often than not, paraded with wide-eyed and unnatural excitement through the news columns and across the video screen.

In the earliest days of journalism, information was often presented as a relatively leisurely chronicling of processes in the world and the community. We have referred (see especially Page 24) to the concept of process journalism as opposed to the prevalent event-centred journalism of modern convention. Much of the better 18th and early 19th century journalism, though it certainly had other problems of its own, described processes rather than events, and this might be an appropriate new direction for modern news presentation. The growing incidence in many newspapers of commentary material, extended interpretive and backgrounding articles, and the like, and of documentary news treatment in television, suggests that the possibility of process journalism is already appreciated in a sense. Such work inevitably remains "pegged" to hard news events, however, and constitutes no real change in the generally held notions about newsworthiness of information.

The American media critic Daniel Boorstin has described the whole problem in these words:

"We need not be theologians to see that we have shifted responsibility for making the world interesting from God to the newspaperman. We used to believe there were only so many "events" in the world. If there were not many intriguing or startling occurrences, it was no fault of the reporter. He could not be expected to report what did not exist.

"Within the last hundred years, however, and especially in the twentieth century, all this has changed. We expect the

papers to be full of news. If there is no news visible to the naked eye, or to the average citizen, we will expect it to be there for the enterprising newsman. The successful reporter is one who can find a story, even if there is no earthquake or assassination or civil war. If he cannot find a story, then he must make one -- by the questions he asks of public figures, by the surprising human interest he unfolds from some commonplace event, or by "the news behind the news". If all else fails, then he must give us a "think piece" -- an embroidering of well-known facts, or a speculation about startling things to come."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, there will always be elements in the news which are best treated as events, sudden natural disasters and such being among them, but the lives of individuals, the progress of organizations, and the evolution of society itself, which ought to be journalism's major concerns, are processes and they should be treated as such. Violent intrusions really are the only aspects of life that happen suddenly, isolated in time, graphically and dramatically, that is to say "entertainingly", and without immediately apparent relationships to processes.

In other words, as it is now defined, news really means news of violence because violence is the only kind of activity which naturally and perfectly fits the news person's understanding of the nature of news.

It is because of this that news people gravitate to violence, not merely in the obvious sense of chronicling criminal activity and disasters of all kinds, which some editors and news directors are actively downplaying nowadays, but, as Boorstin implies, also in the myriad more subtle forms which violence can take -- the emphasizing of governmental crisis or scandal while

ignoring the routine of Parliament and public administration; the focus upon the economic threat, rather than describing the course of the economy so that everyone might understand it; the singling out of the obscure disease, the bizarre occurrence, and the whole range of Chicken Little things that might happen to us, but actually do so with all the frequency of winning lotteries, instead of telling us about each others' real lives and the routine of our communities.

News people must now realize their confining definition of news also leaves them vulnerable to manipulation by individuals and groups seeking publicity for purposes that may or may not be pro-social. The concept of the "media event" is common coinage in the currency of the public vocabulary, and in essence means the staging of an event which the news fraternity, given its rigid understanding of what constitutes news, feels compelled to cover. We were struck by the fact that 16 of our interview subjects mentioned organized labor's national day of protest as a major story in response to our first question. For several months in advance of the day in question, October 14th, 1976, the news fraternity knew that there would be a specific day filled with specific events ranging from fiery speeches, to strikes, to possible incidents of violence. The day fizzled, rather, when it finally arrived, but it drew undivided media attention. By creating it, the labor movement drew vastly more attention to itself and its views than would have been the case had these been left in their natural perspective as an aspect of a general process of labor economics at work in society.

Reporters might want to ask themselves how often these days they seem to be covering, not merely events, but staged events, and to what extent they are influenced by them, and for what reasons.

During the course of the interviews, we developed the sense that some news people, at least, recognize that problems exist with the event-centred definition of news; that they are concerned about the problem of manipulation which it creates; and that they might like to move toward the more natural activity of describing processes. The almost instinctive fear news people have of being beaten to a story by representative of another medium probably is the most important restraining factor. There is irony here, because the powerful economic competition historically so strong among the media themselves, and underlying the apparently keen sense of competition still felt among news people themselves, no longer has any real substance.

In their responses to our eleventh question, no fewer than 24 of our interview subjects said their newsrooms were in direct and vital competition with other newsrooms, and indicated they react accordingly in their individual newsgathering activities. Yet most newspapers and television stations today are the only representatives of their respective media in the markets they serve, and even though many communities boast both a newspaper and a television station, audiences view television and read newspapers at different times and for different reasons.

Genuine, direct competition probably continues to exist in the Toronto television market, but even there, the shared audience would be better served and more richly served if the

TV newsrooms ignored each other and got on with the telling of Toronto's story, each in its unique way. Some corporate advertising competition exists in the Toronto and Ottawa newspaper markets, but not of a sufficiently intense nature to justify its extension into the newsrooms. Each of Toronto's three dailies is unique in character, and has carved out a distinct socio-economic market for itself; any market overlap that may exist cannot be seen as justification for important competition among journalists. Ottawa's papers are less dissimilar, leaving a reason (if not an excuse) for continuing journalistic competition in that city alone in Ontario.

## 2. Let The Tell Their Own Story

News people feel very much misunderstood by the public, a situation which leads to a jaundiced view of society shared by many news people, which must color their work and affect the news selection process. Yet, in the main, the telling of the news story has been left to Hollywood and to the occasional novelist. Woodward and Bernstein of Watergate and Washington Post fame haven't helped. Real news people know that the aggressive, intimidating, newsgathering methods depicted by Robert Redford and his friends in the film version of the Watergate saga don't work very well with most people most of the time. Journalists know that any hack can look good (for a while) with a contact like "Deep Throat", but that such contacts are both extremely rare and highly suspect.

Real newsgathering is hard, time-consuming, often boring work, as our interview subjects have described it. News people are underpaid, relatively speaking; they do run into

people who are rude or devious in their treatment of reporters; they do run into people at parties who seize the opportunity to push pet projects (or are afraid to talk at all); and they are indifferently treated as human beings by their employers. Finally, the London newsman who told us that the general public hasn't a "scintilla of an idea" about the realities of the newsgathering, editing and production processes, is entirely correct.

Our point is a simple one. Clearly, no one else is going to tell the news person's story if he doesn't do it himself. It is an important story of an important social process. With the accurate telling of it, stereotypes will fade, and a useful dialogue might begin between the news fraternity and its audience.

### 3. Journalism Must Recognize Its Responsibilities

In their responses to the tenth question, 16 of our subjects said the reporter should restrict himself to the purely objective reporting of events, while another nine supported the idea of news interpretation as necessary, but not carried to the point of subjective-opinion journalism. Objectivity is an old and fundamental tenet of the liberal journalistic tradition. Apparently it has survived, more or less in tact, the challenge of the "new journalists" of the 1960s who argued that journalism could only become a humane and honest process if the journalist were allowed, and indeed encouraged, to let his own emotions and subjective perceptions color everything he wrote. The classic liberal statement that the

essential role of the journalist must be to convey information, as anonymously as possible, to a public that will decide upon the merits of cases, seems to have an eternal logic in a democratic environment. The passing of the subjective essay, long on opinion and short on factual data, which constituted so much of the new journalism, is surely not to be regretted.

The new journalists did make the valid point, however, that traditional objectivity breeds detachment in the traditional journalist, and becomes too often an excuse for divorcement from responsibility for his actions. Journalists, and many others too, became painfully aware a full quarter century ago of the weakness inherent in objective detachment when the American television commentator of the day, Edward R. Murrow, used his network broadcast "Hear It Now" to demonstrate the fearful degree of manipulation news people permitted, all in the name of journalistic objectivity, in their coverage of Senator Joseph McCarthy's infamous hearings on un-American activities.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps as a result of the experience, few North American journalists today are quite as ready to blindly write whatever they are told, but the process of creating an objective but responsible journalism is far from complete. It is now almost 30 years since the Commission on the Freedom of the Press published its two-volume report of research into the state of American

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1. A full account of Murrow's battle with McCarthy is in Friendly, Fred W., Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control... New York: Vintage Books, 1967.

journalism.<sup>1</sup> That document, which remains what should be fundamental reading for all journalists, made a number of recommendations, including this one: News must be a "truthful, comprehensive account of the day's events in a context which give them meaning." This means that it is not enough, however objective the exercise may be, to present information which the public cannot understand. News frequently must be interpreted, translated into understandable language, if general comprehension is to be achieved. Even more important, news must be presented in a context which is meaningful to the reader, and reflective of the reality of his world. We cannot believe that much of today's event-centred journalism with all its possibilities for distortion -- the very thing the Commission found offensive 30 years ago -- honestly can be regarded as meaningful in context or reflective of reality.

It was particularly disturbing, especially in responses to our questions on the potential social impact of violence reporting, to find that so many of the people we spoke with denied any responsibility the journalist might have for the possible social impact of his reporting -- just so long as it was accurate and objective in a narrow interpretation of these words.

At this point, we can only repeat the words of the CBC news director who told us there is a responsibility "to inform

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1. Commission on the Freedom of the Press, A Free and Responsible Press. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947.

not only at the lowest mass level, but at a somewhat higher level, too." It is, of course, all very well to recommend that journalists must accept responsibility for the impact of the things they write. Clearly the installation of such a value as a working principle in the newsroom will not be easy, but an important step will have been taken when all journalists recognize that words, even truthful ones, can be more damaging than bullets. At a more concrete level, the remaining recommendations contain some positive suggestions which, for better or worse, address themselves essentially to the great question of responsibility in journalism.

#### 4. Make the Press Council Work

The Ontario Press Council must be given a vitality it now sadly lacks, and a greatly expanded role. Only a handful of newspapers now belong to it, and the exclusions include such critically important ones as the Globe and Mail. The council's frame of reference does not now extend to include the activities of radio and television newsrooms among its concerns; the complaints it hears are few and insignificant; and its affairs are poorly publicized. Few members of the public even realize the council exists as an avenue of redress against perceived media injustices.

The press council's membership should include every news operation in the province involved in the dissemination of information for general public consumption. Its executive functions should be in the hands of a group consisting of representatives

of the lay public, media ownership and working journalists, but with the latter group holding a proportionately larger share of votes than either of the others. Owners and audiences must have a vital presence on the council, of course, but the demonstrated economic pre-occupation of owners, and the lack of knowledge about the news media among even the more sophisticated elements of the public, suggest the wisdom of making a beginning with journalists having the strongest voice. We develop, conceptually at least, something of the substance of the proposed revitalized council in the context of the following suggestions, but in summary our proposals include these elements: Authority derived from "arms length" legislation of the sort under which other professions function in Ontario, to establish standards of conduct and education, and to administer them; assured and adequate funding, if necessary from the public purse.

##### 5. A System of Ethics

The existing ad hoc approach to questions of journalistic ethics is inadequate. The evidence of this study suggests that news people give little thought to ethical concerns, and would seem to assume that individually understood concepts of fairness and accuracy in reporting are sufficient. If members of the public fear or resent journalistic intrusions into their lives, as many news people we interviewed suggested or implied, a large part of the reason must be that members of the public have good cause to feel concerned -- there are no guarantees as to exactly how information given may be handled.

Brief ethical statements, of the sort provided in Appendix C, cannot work. They are much too general to be of practical value in application to specific individual situations; as we have seen, they are understandably ignored by most working news people. A beginning might be made, however, by the establishment of a commission charged with formulating a comprehensive statement of journalistic ethics. Such a commission, acting as an ad hoc committee of our revitalized Ontario Press Council, and acting under its authority, should be composed primarily of working journalists, but also should have significant representation from the broader community.

In itself, the work of the commission would serve only two initiating purposes: To focus the attention of all working journalists on ethical questions; and to provide a foundation statement of ethics upon which a practical and working system of ethical standards could be built.

If a systematic statement of ethics is to have lasting and growing value, it will have to be applied on a day-to-day basis to specific situations, and here the experience of the British Press Council is instructive.<sup>1</sup> The argument is often made, especially, it seems, in journalistic circles outside Britain, that the British council is of no worth because it does not have the authority to enforce its decisions with a system of fines that would work a genuine economic hardship upon

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1. One of the best descriptions of the history, function and philosophy of the British Press Council is in Levy, H. Phillip, The Press Council: History, Procedure and Cases. New York: Macmillan, 1967.

offending media and individual news people. This argument misses the point.

The central and lasting worth of the British concept is that the council, acting in its quasi-judicial capacity, hears cases of alleged media and individual journalistic ethical offences. Over the nearly two decades of its existence in its present form, it has developed a substantial body of decisions, published annually in book form, and now in the process of being indexed, which guide the council as each new situation arises, and which also serve most importantly as a before-the-fact guide for editors and writers. The body of press council decisions clearly is analagous in its content and in its application to the tradition of English precedent law, and with each passing year, its decisions accumulate, making it more and more important as a system of ethical guidance for English journalism.

The fact that the British council has but nominal coercive power to enforce its rulings is not important. It is dealing, after all, with questions of ethics; the people and institutions who come before it are not criminals. One should not forget that the courts of law, the criminal code, and the law treating libel and contempt of court remain as forces supported by powerful coercive authority to deal with journalistic transgressions beyond the pale of legally accepted behavior. Individuals and institutions coming before the press council

will normally have a fundamental respect for the concept of rule of law, and for such as these, persuasion with a minimal or no coercive element should suffice.

We would like to see, then, an Ontario Press Council, with an important quasi-judicial function provided for in its enabling legislation, more or less patterned after the British experience. It would use the statement of ethics which we have suggested as a foundation upon which to build, over time, its own body of precedent "law", quite appropriately borrowing from the older British body as necessary, especially, perhaps, in the early years of its operation. In the process, in years to come, Ontario would evolve a comprehensive system of journalistic ethics completely compatible with the liberal democratic tradition of Canadian and Ontario society.

## 6. Professionalization

Few of the news people we interviewed saw merit in the concept of professionalization, but it is difficult to see any improvement in the practice of journalism being possible without it. The psychology of the journalis, as we have seen, is that of an employee without long-term policy formulating responsibilities. Essentially this is the point made by Bagdikian in the passages quoted earlier in this chapter, and unless this psychology can be changed, it is unlikely that leadership in reform can be sought among the ranks of the working journalists.

Professionalization would seem to be the necessary precondition.

Again, we look to our revitalized Ontario Press Council to assume a leadership role. It would have, under the enabling legislation which we have suggested, the necessary disciplinary machinery of a profession. This authority could be extended, perhaps through a committee of the council composed entirely of working news people, to encompass the other usual appurtenances of a formal profession.

In the first place, there would have to be a careful entrenchment of professional control in the committee to ensure its freedom, not only from the possibility of political manipulation, but from inappropriate and undue employer influence as well.

Machinery would be needed to establish and administer a set of educational standards for journalists. We believe these requirements should be to a university level, and that they should include definite components of journalism education, not only in the techniques of the craft, but in such important areas as journalism ethics, history and law. Ontario has three established university-level schools of journalism, at Western Ontario, Carleton and the Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, and all three have excellent records in the education and training of first class newsroom personnel dating back to the 1940s. Clearly these institutions, with their rich experience in the education of journalists, must be involved deeply in the processes of establishing and maintaining standards of journalism education.

It is a sad fact that these three schools have been neglected, rather, over the years. Their work has been conducted without appreciable industry support, moral or financial -- a state of affairs quite reversing the relationship between medicine, law, engineering, and even business management, and their professional schools in the universities. There is something of a state of studied anti-intellectualism in the newsrooms of the province, a peculiar posture as most modern news people (on the daily papers and in the major television newsrooms, at least) have quite thorough educations. Of the people we talked with, 16 held BA degrees, four more were graduates of one or other of the three journalism schools we have mentioned, and another three had experienced some post-secondary education. Despite this generally high educational level, in the responses to our 31st question in which we asked what sort of education a young person should acquire before entering upon a career in journalism, fully 13 people saw no particular value in a university education. Fourteen said a broad general BA would be helpful, and only three saw merit in a university journalism program.

Finally, we believe professionalization must allow for research into many areas of newsroom activity, news content, and newsroom-audience relationships. We feel such work should be encouraged and funded not especially among people working in academic environments outside the newsroom, though certainly there too, but more importantly among the news people themselves. We would suggest for them a generous sabbatical system, funded

by the media themselves as a condition of a professional newsroom environment, which would provide individual journalists with both the time and the money to study their work and to reflect upon it.



Appendix A

The Questionnaire



Royal Commission on Violence in the  
Communications Industry

A Questionnaire: The Perceptions and  
Attitudes of News Personnel

Professor A.M. Osler  
August, 1976

The Questionnaire

1. What are the two or three biggest news stories, local, national or international, which your newsroom has handled in the past six months or so?
2. What special qualities, as news, did these stories have that make them stand out in your mind now?
3. Lots of information is generated in the world every day, but only a minute portion of it is newsworthy. What are the qualities a piece of information must have to make it newsworthy?
4. What kind of story is really going to get your newsroom excited -- squads of reporters and camera types dispatched, editors scrambling everywhere, reworking the front/the script -- the whole bit?
5. As a news person, you have a really unique view of the world. Does this special vantage point make the news person different, or set him/her apart in any special way?
6. News media seem frequently to be criticized these days for placing undue emphasis upon news of crime, human conflict, tragedies and violence of all kinds. How do you feel about this sort of criticism?
7. Do you feel people in the viewing/reading audience are more likely or less likely to pay attention to news items when there is an element of violence or tragedy of some kind in the theme? Why?
8. When one guy skyjacked a jet, a hundred followed; when one kid shot up a high school in Brampton, another followed suit in Ottawa. A lot of people are saying that bizarre stories of violence bring the dangerous kooks out of the woodwork, and that such stories should at least be played in a minor key. How do you deal with this one as a news person?

9. Some sociologists are telling us that many people have distorted views about modern society, especially about the crime and violence in our midst, and the media are being blamed. We are told there are too many little old ladies with a pathological fear of being mugged; too many young women terrified of meeting a rapist in the underground garage. How do you answer this challenge?
10. There is continuing controversy among news people as to whether the public is best served by traditional objective reporting of events, or by the more subjective "advocacy" style that attempts to interpret and explain. What are your views?
11. Is your news organization in competition on a day-to-day basis with any other news organizations? Which ones?
12. Is the competitive factor something that affects the treatment of news? How?
13. You see U.S. wire copy, probably read a few U.S. papers and watch American newscasts from time to time. Do the Americans handle news differently from Canadians? Do you see emphases in U.S. news that you don't see in Canadian news?
14. It is pretty well uniformly recognized in the news business that it is in "poor taste" to mention in a story, say, the name of a rape victim. Apart from the well-known legal restraints, are there any other "taboos", written or unwritten but commonly agreed upon, against printing or broadcasting certain types of information?
15. Understanding that "freedom of the press" nowadays is extended to include the electronic as well as the print media, what does the concept "freedom of the press" mean to you?
16. Assuming the validity of the concept that every freedom has its responsibilities, what are the important responsibilities of free media. Do the media live up to them?

17. When members of the public feel that your medium has behaved, intentionally or unintentionally, in a less than responsible fashion, how can they make their concern known to those people responsible?
18. How do you feel about these methods of public redress. Are they adequate or inadequate?
19. Doctors and lawyers function professionally in Ontario under legislation that requires them to belong to professional organizations. These bodies have statutory authority and responsibility to criticize, censure, and even exclude from practice, any member of the profession whose behaviour is judged inadequate. How would you feel about similar legislation to regulate the behaviour of news people?
20. What's your opinion of press councils?
21. How would you feel if press councils in Ontario had authority, perhaps legislated authority, to enforce their decisions?
22. The CRTC, operating under federal authority, exercises a measure of quality control over the content of the broadcast media. Do you approve or disapprove of this? What would be the consequences of extending this regulatory authority to cover print media as well?
23. Is your salary a reasonable one for the sort of work you do?
24. Looking outside the news business for a moment, what are two other occupations roughly equal to your own in terms of their importance to society?
25. What do you think is the general public's idea of the nature of a news person's work, and his role in society? How fair and accurate is this view?
26. Are newspapers and television stations primarily businesses, or public service organizations? How do you think your publisher/ station owner would respond to this question?

27. Advertising is the bread and butter of the news business.  
Do you feel the advertisers who buy time/space  
have any obvious or subtle influence on the operation  
of your newsroom?
28. Canadian news media are big businesses, and apparently  
getting bigger, if the growth of chains and other  
sorts of corporate tie-ins are any indication.  
How is all this affecting the actual business of  
gathering and processing news in this country?
29. Quite apart from your salary and any benefits you  
receive personally in your employment, how do you feel  
about the level of support resources and facilities  
your employer provides to assist you in your work?
30. Do you think most people working in your newsroom are  
happy or unhappy? Why?
31. What opinions do you have as to the best way to train  
or educate young people for work in a modern newsroom?
32. If you were the publisher/station owner, what changes would  
you make in the operation of your newsroom?

Notes

1. The following information will be recorded with each interview, but will be held in strictest confidence, and used only for statistical and verification purposes.
  - a) the subject's name and title.
  - b) the name of the subject's employer.
  - c) the age and sex of the subject.
2. All interviews will be tape-recorded, and later transcribed verbatim.
3. Prior to each interview session, the subject will be given these assurances and instructions:
  - a) the subject will be assured that his anonymity will be protected.
  - b) the subject will be assured that the information he or she gives will be used for scholarly purposes only, and that his or her anonymity will be protected in any report of the research in academic journals or other publications.
  - c) the subject will be asked to answer each question succinctly, but will be invited to expand if he or she wishes. The interviewer may from time to time ask supplementary questions.
  - d) the subject will be invited to select his or her own place and, when convenient, time, for the interview.
  - e) if the subject asks about the nature of the research, he or she will be told in most general terms that the interviews are part of a research project examining the role of news personnel and the media in society. It will be explained that the giving of further information might compromise the validity of the research.

## Appendix B

Table: Best News Stories Identified By  
Interview Subjects



Statistical Summary: Responses to Question One

The question: What are the two or three biggest news stories,  
local, national or international, which your newsroom  
has handled in the past six months or so?

Total Responses:	83
(Four individuals were able to offer fewer than the requested three examples.)	
Stories with local themes.	26
Stories with non-local themes.	57
Stories with violent primary or violent prominent secondary theme(s).	45
Stories with no violence content.	38

Individual Stories, and Closely-Linked Groups of Stories, Most  
Often Mentioned:

Single Stories:

Labor protest against anti-inflation program	16 mentions
Israeli raid on Entebbe airport	7
The 1976 Olympic Games	5

Prominent Linked Groups: (Stories mentioned immediately above  
are excluded from these statistics.)

All federal political stories	9
All Ontario political stories	4
Natural disasters (earthquakes, epidemics, volcanic eruptions, etc. in 1976).	5
All local violent crime and accident stories	15



Appendix C

Some Examples of Journalistic  
Codes of Ethics



Example #1: The Code of the American Society of Newspaper Editors

The Primary Function of newspapers is to communicate to the human race what its members do, feel, and think. Journalism, therefore, demands of its practitioners the widest range of intelligence, or knowledge, and of experience, as well as natural and trained powers of observation and reasoning. To its opportunities as a chronicle are indissolubly linked its obligations as teacher and interpreter.

To the end of finding some means of codifying sound practice and just aspirations of American journalism, these canons are set forth:

I

RESPONSIBILITY -- The right of a newspaper to attract and hold readers is restricted by nothing but considerations of public welfare. The use a newspaper makes of the share of public attention it gains serves to determine its sense of responsibility, which it shares with every member of its staff. A journalist who uses his power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy purpose is faithless to a high trust.

II

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS -- Freedom of the press is to be guarded as a vital right of mankind. It is the unquestionable right to discuss whatever is not explicitly forbidden by law,



including the wisdom of any restrictive statute.

### III

INDEPENDENCE -- Freedom from all obligations except that of fidelity to the public trust is vital.

1. Promotion of any private interest contrary to the general welfare, for whatever reason, is not compatible with honest journalism. So-called news communications from private sources should not be published without public notice of their source or else substantiation of their claims to value as news, both in form and substance.

2. Partisanship, in editorial comment which knowingly departs from the truth, does violence to the spirit of American journalism; in the news columns, it is subversive of a fundamental principle of the profession.

### IV

SINCERITY, TRUTHFULNESS AND ACCURACY -- Good faith with the reader is the foundation of all journalism worthy of the name.

1. By every consideration of good faith a newspaper is constrained to be truthful. It is not to be excused for lack of thoroughness or accuracy within its control, or failure to obtain command of these essential qualities.

2. Headlines should be fully warranted by the contents of the articles which they surmount.

### V

IMPARTIALITY -- Sound practice makes clear distinction

between news reporting and expressions of opinion. News reports should be free from opinion or bias of any kind.

1. This rule does not apply to so-called special articles unmistakably devoted to advocacy or characterized by a signature authorizing the writer's own conclusions and interpretations.

## VI

FAIR PLAY -- A newspaper should not publish unofficial charges affecting reputation or moral character without opportunity given to the accused to be heard; right practice demands the giving of such opportunity in all cases of serious accusation outside judicial proceedings.

1. A newspaper should not invade private rights or feelings without some warrant of public right as distinguished from public curiosity.

2. It is the privilege, as it is the duty, of a newspaper to make prompt and complete correction of its own serious mistakes of fact or opinion, whatever their origin.

## VII

DECENCY -- A newspaper cannot escape conviction of insincerity if while professing high moral purpose it supplies incentives to base conduct, such as are to be found in the details of crime and vice, publication of which is not demonstrably for the public good. Lacking authority to enforce its canons, the journalists here represented can but express the hope that deliberate pandering to vicious instincts will encounter effective public disapproval or yield the influence to a preponderant professional condemnation.

Example #2: The following is an excerpt pertaining to televised news presentation from the Television Code of the National Association of Broadcasters.

V. Treatment of News and Public Events

NEWS

1. A television station's news schedule should be adequate and well-balanced.
2. News reporting should be factual, fair, and without bias.
3. A television broadcaster should exercise particular discrimination in the acceptance, placement and presentation of advertising in news programs so that such advertising should be clearly distinguishable from the news content.
4. At all times, pictorial and verbal material for news and comment should conform to other sections of these standards, wherever such sections are reasonably applicable.
5. Good taste should prevail in the selection and handling of news. Morbid, sensational or alarming details not essential to the factual report, especially in connection with stories of crime or sex, should be avoided. News should be telecast in such a manner as to avoid panic and unnecessary alarm.
6. Commentary and analysis should be clearly identified as such.
7. Pictorial material should be chosen with care and not presented in a misleading manner.
8. All news interview programs should be governed by accepted standards of ethical journalism, under which the interviewer selects the questions to be asked. Where there is advance agreement materially restricting an important or newsworthy

area of questioning, the interviewer will state on the program that such limitations have been agreed upon. Such disclosure should be made if the person being interviewed requires that questions be submitted in advance or if he participates in editing a recording of the interview prior to its use on the air.

9. A television broadcaster should exercise due care in his supervision of content, format, and presentation of newscasts originated by his station, and in his selection of newscasters, commentators and analysts.

## Appendix D

### A Selected and Annotated Bibliography



ETHICS IN JOURNALISM

Adams, Anthony A. "Broadcasters' Attitudes toward Public Responsibility, An Ohio Case Study." Columbia Journalism Review, vol. 16(4), Fall 1972, pp. 407-420.

Adams found clear differences in the patterns of opinions among broadcasters surveyed regarding broadcast responsibility to the public, freedom of the press and the role of the FCC.

Anderson, James A. "The Alliance of Broadcast Stations and Newspapers: The Problem of Information Control." Journal of Broadcasting, vol. XVI(1), Winter 1971-2, pp. 51-64.

The suggestion that patterns of multi-media ownership result in both anti-competitive practices and the potential for regressive information control, was not found to be valid in Anderson's study — newspaper allied stations performed better generally.

Bernstein, Carl and Bob Woodward. All the President's Men. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974.

An excellent study of conflict in the reconciliation of truth and ethics as written by the two Washington Post reporters who broke the Watergate case.

Commission on Freedom of the Press. A Free and Responsible Press. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947.

A landmark, controversial document still treated by current critiques of press standards and principles.

Cuyler, Lewis C. "Ethics of Investigative Reporting Questioned," Editor and Publisher, September 13, 1975, p. 10.

Twenty-five Massachusetts journalists answer questions about investigative reporting of crime and corruption. They attempt to justify their actions and decisions.

Davis, Staff and Witt Schultz. "Riot Coverage: Cool It?" Quill, vol. 55(10), Oct. 1968, pp. 16-20.

Discusses "codes" between police and the press to play down racial unrest.

Dimmick, John. "The Belief Systems of War Correspondents: A Bayesian Analysis." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50(3), Autumn, 1973, pp. 560-562.



From a content analysis of World War II correspondents' memoirs, Dimmick finds that role stress is compensated for by concurrent beliefs in civilian involvement in war and the necessity of censorship.

Evans, Harold M. "Is the Press Too Powerful?" Columbia Journalism Review, vol. x(5), Jan/Feb. 1972, pp. 8-16.

Evans proposes press performance centers to stimulate public debate on freedom of access to knowledge: guarded vs. manipulated. He rejects notions of press control as only a free press can be a guardian of freedom.

Hulteng, John L. The Messenger's Motives: Ethical Problems of the News Media. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976.

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The conflict between the roles of gatekeeper and advocate may impede professionalization. Clear differentiation of the roles will help both groups.

Kriss, R. "The National News Council at Age One." Columbia Journalism Review, Nov. 1974, pp. 31-38.

Kriss lauds the survival of the U.S. national news council, notes the criticism which has been levied against it in the past year and concludes that the council could be considered insurance against press control as well as for satisfactory press performance.

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Mann, Russ. "Using Juvenile Offenders Names Cuts Crime in Lompoc, Calif." Quill 55(7), July 1967, p. 38.

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Markham, James et al. "Journalism Educators and the Press Council Idea: A Symposium." Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 1, Spring 1968, pp. 77-85.

The role of the AEJ in serving as a "watch-dog" for the mass media is analysed at the 1967 AEJ convention.

Merrill, John C. and Ralph D. Barney (eds.). Ethics and the Press: Readings in Mass Media Morality. New York: Hastings House, 1975, 338 pp.

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Merrill, John C. The Imperative of Freedom: A Philosophy of Journalistic Autonomy. New York: Hastings House, 1974.

A re-statement of a "pure" libertarian press system which suggests an absolute journalistic autonomy and a standard of voluntary press responsibility.

Meyer, Philip E. "A Newspaper's Role Between the Riots." Nieman Reports 22 (2), June 1968, pp. 3-8.

A good newspaper does not merely exploit the sensationalism of civil disturbance, it discusses, analyzes, dissects the problem to find out what is there in the hope of fostering workable solutions.

Phillips, David Graham. The Treason of the Senate. Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964, 256 pp. (Edited by George E. Mourey and Judson A. Grenier.)

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Rivers, William L. and Wilbur Schramm. Responsibility in Mass Communication. 2nd ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

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Smith, F.L. and D. J. Leroy. "Perceived Ethicality of Some TV News Production Techniques by a Sample of Florida Legislators." Speech Monographs, vol. 40(4), 1973, p. 326-

The suggestion is made that future controversies between press and politician could be avoided if electronic journalists articulate and critically examine their production behaviours.

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Three types emerged from this attempt at an empirical definition of the newspaper's role. Type I - stressed social responsibilities of the press, advocated outside controls. Type II - (all newspaper policy makers appeared in this category) strongly opposed regulation and favoured an active press role. Type III favoured a passive stance toward government and preferred a newspaper which served as a meeting ground of ideas and information for all segments of society.

Tuchmann, Gaye. "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity." American Journal of Sociology, January 1972, pp. 660-679.

Tuchman argues that newsmen's careful attention to both sides in a controversy via quotations and scrupulous consideration of 'who/what/where/when' before treating 'why', is basically a ploy to protect themselves from criticism rather than ensuring unbiased stories.

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Wilcox, Walter. "The Staged News Photograph and Professional Ethics." Journalism Quarterly, Autumn, 1961.

Williamson, Lenora. "Ethics Code Adopted by Editorial Writers." Editor and Publisher, Oct. 25, 1975, p. 17.

The National Conference of Editorial Writers adopts a new basic statement of principles, which includes non-acceptance of "gifts of value, free travel and other favors that can compromise integrity, or appear to do so."

NEWS: DEFINITIONS AND TREATMENT

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Anderson, John. "Chicago Murders: A Little Progress." Columbia Journalism Review 5 (2), pp. 30-32.

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Arlen, Michael J. "The Road from Highway One." Columbia Journalism Review, July-August 1975, pp. 22-6.

Television coverage of the Vietnam War, focused primarily on combat footage and obscured the "reality" of the situation.

Bagdikian, Ben H. "The Gentle Suppression," Columbia Journalism Review, vol. 4(1), Spring 1965, pp. 16-19.

The three Washington newspapers have formed an informal conspiracy to play down news of the American Nazis in the nation's capital.

Bagdikian, Ben H. "Shaping Media Content: Professional Personnel and Organizational Structure." Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 37(4), 1973-74, pp. 569-579.

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Bailey, George A. "Rough Justice on a Saigon Street: A Gatekeeper Study of NBC's Tet Execution Film." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 49(2), Summer 1972, pp. 221-238.

An analysis of the filming, telecasting and audience reaction of General Loan's famed shot.

Beebe, George. "Is the Big Murder Trial Passe?" ASNE Bulletin 496, p. I ff. April 1, 1966.

AP survey shows that the press generally downplayed the Mossler murder trial held in Miami. UPI made similar findings.

Bigman, Stanley K. "Rivals in Conformity: A Study of Two Competing Dailies." Journalism Quarterly, June 1948, pp. 130-131.

Bogart, Leo. "Changing News Interests and the News Media." Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 32(4), Winter 1968-69, pp. 560-574.

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Crespi, Irving. "How 'Hard-hat' is the Public on Crime." Columbia Journalism Review, vol. XIV(3), Sept./Oct. 1975, pp. 40-41.

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DeMott, J. "Interpretive News Stories Compared With Spot News." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50(1), 1973, p. 102-

Discriminant function analysis shows interpretive stories have more opinion, are longer and more likely to deal with social problems.

Diamond, Edwin. "'Reporter Power' Takes Root." Columbia Journalism Review, 9(2), Summer 1970, pp. 12-18.

The democratic revolution in reportage is affecting both electronic and print media.

Dominick, Joseph R. "Television Journalism vs. Show Business: A Content Analysis of Eyewitness News." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 52, Summer 1975, pp. 213-218.

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Donohew, Lewis. "Newspaper Gatekeepers and Forces in the News Channel." Public Opinion Quarterly, vol 31(1), pp. 61-68, Spring 1967.

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Epstein, Edward J. News from Nowhere: Television and the News. New York: Random House, 1973.

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Fedler, Fred. "The Media and Minority Groups: A Study of Adequacy of Access." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50, No. 1, Spring 1973, pp. 109-117.

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often than established groups were often shown involved in demonstrations on violence.

Gold, D. and J. L. Simmons. "News Selection Patterns Among Iowa Dailies." Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 29(3), 1965, pp. 425-430.

The extent of wire copy used by 24 mostly small dailies does not affect which news stories are emphasized. Papers studied differed little from each other or from AP in wire stories stressed, indicating an "uncritical acceptance" of AP news patterns.

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Gould, Stanhope. "Coors Brews The News." Columbia Journalism Review, vol. 13(6), Mar./Apr. 1975, pp. 17-29.

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The attention of 300 million people can be captured by a few utilizing mass media in such contrived incidents as the civil demonstration planned only for the TV cameras.

Gross, Gerald (ed.). The Responsibility of the Press. New York: Fleet, 1966, 416 pp.

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As a result of too few local reporters covering the World Series victory celebration in Pittsburgh Sunday, Oct. 17, 1971, wire service reports went unverified and a sensational hype by the news service caused the day to be immortalized as a drunken orgy of rape and looting, a description later proved invalid by police and local journalists.

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Haskins, Jack B. "'Cloud with a Silver Lining' approach to violence news." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50(3), Autumn 1973, pp. 549-52.

Haskins, Jack B. "Readers' vs Editors' Reaction to Violence." Editor and Publisher, vol. 101(49), Dec. 7, 1968, p. 44.

Readers are more interested than editors think in remote, impersonal, large-scale reports of violent death. They are less interested in personal, close by, small-scale, violent deaths involving families and children.

Healey, G. "Individual's Personal Safety Protected by News Guidelines." Editor and Publisher, July 20, 1974, p. 30.

Following the kidnapping of a reporter's wife, the managing editor of the Minneapolis Tribune laid down policy guidelines regarding news coverage. He stressed the need to get the news swiftly, fully, and responsibly, not at the expense of human life.

Hoskins, R. L. "Readability Study of AP and UPI Wire Copy." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50(2), p. 360-

Hoskins concludes that both U.S. national news agencies could make significant improvements in the readability of their news stories.

"How Influential is TV News?" Columbia Journalism Review, vol. 9(2), Summer 1970, pp. 19-29.

The International Broadcast Institute panel discuss media dislocation, audience selective perception of news, violence and the possibility that a misinformed public may impose stringent press controls.

Hunt, Todd. "Beyond the Journalistic Event: The Changing Concept of News." Mass Comm. Review, vol. 1, No. 2, April 1974, pp. 23-28.

Hunt pleads for journalists to move beyond event-centered reporting into an on-going examination of the processes of human behaviour.

Jones, Harold Y. "Filling Up the White Space." Columbia Journalism Review, vol. XIV(1), May/June 1975, pp. 10-11.

As news director of the Expo '74 World's Fair in Spokane Washington, Jones found that smaller newspapers were willing to dispense with writers and reporters and print "canned copy" to fill the spaces between advertisements.

Justice, Blair. "The News Value of Conflict." Quill, vol. 53 (4), April 1965.

A science writer questions the "curious dichotomy" evident in news play; editors assume that death and disaster rate top billings because readers are interested, but the same editors acknowledge that other news interests them much more than conflict items.

"Killing Crime Stories does not Pay off." IAPA News, Feb.-Mar. 1974, p. 4.

Media in Webster City, Iowa voluntarily suppressed stories dealing with vandalism for 90 days resulting in 36.5% increase in vandalism.

Knopf, Terry Ann. "Sniping - a New Pattern of Violence?" Trans-Action, vol. 6(9), pp. 22-29, Summer 1970.

The public and officials misunderstand sniping because of press distortion.

Kroeger, Albert S. "Vietnam: Television's Cruellest Test." Television, vol. 23(5), May, 1966, pp. 24-27.

TV news coverage from Vietnam is escalating and there is continuing debate about whether the close up of the war is to the public's liking.

Kueneman, Rodney M. "News Policies of Broadcast Stations for Civil Disturbances and Disasters." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 52, Winter 1975, pp. 670-677.

This survey found that stations fear public panic and have special policies to withhold information and/or check reports more strictly in the event of natural disasters and especially with regard to civil disturbances (rioting, looting, etc.).

Mark, Sir Robert. "Kidnapping, Terrorism and the Media." Nieman Reports, vol. XXX, Spring 1976, No. 1, pp. 15-18.

Mark presses for co-operation between police and media to avoid excessive exploitation of crimes: kidnapping, terrorism.

Meyer, John C. "Newspaper Reporting of Crime and Justice: Analysis of an Assumed Difference." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 52, Winter 1975, pp. 731-734.

Comparison of the crime coverage by the New York Times and Daily News found the Times with a greater volume of coverage but no other differences.

Morris, Monica B. "Newspapers and the New Feminists: Black-Out as Social Control?" Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50, No. 1, Spring 1973, pp. 37-42.

Sparse coverage of feminist movements by papers in England and Los Angeles suggests a black-out may have been in effect.

"News or Non-news." Editor and Publisher. Nov. 9, 1974, p. 6.

Citing the case of the Ali-Foreman fight, the complaint is made that news may become a packaged product for private audiences and barred from general airing - rights may soon be sold to all news-worthy events.

Nixon, Raymond B. and Robert L. Jones. "The Content of Non-competitive vs. Competitive Newspapers." Journalism Quarterly, Summer 1956.

Payne, David E. and Kaye Price Payne. "Newspapers and Crime in Detroit." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 47(4), 1970, pp. 233-238, 308.

This study, which examines crime rate change in Detroit during two newspaper strikes, found that non-expressive crimes decreased significantly during the absence of daily papers.

Payne, David E. "Newspapers and Crime: What Happens During Strike Periods." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 51, Winter 1974, pp. 607-612.

Analysis of crime statistics during newspaper strikes in several North American cities indicated no concrete evidence of a strong, consistent relationship between newspaper publication and crime rates.

Pool, Ithiel de Sola and Irwin Schulman. "Newsmen's Fantasies, Audiences, and Newswriting." Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 23(2), 1959, pp. 145-158.

Employing "imaginary interlocutors" who figured in journalists' minds while they wrote their stories, Pool and Schulman discovered that the accuracy of reporting was low on good news and bad news alike when the news was incongruent with the reporters' fantasies.

Pride, Richard A. and Daniel H. Clarke. "Race Relations in Television News: A Content Analysis of the Networks." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50(2), Summer 1973, pp. 319-328.

This study shows that the three U.S. networks did not operate uniformly in racial coverage from 1968 to 1970. NBC put more emphasis on the race issue than did the other two networks

"Profit Motivates Television News, Professor Finds." Broadcasting, Jan. 22, 1973, p. 32.

The richer and more profitable a TV station or network is, the more—and more controversial—news and public affairs programming it is likely to present and more likely it is to editorialize. Marginally profitable stations cannot afford to present such programs, especially documentaries and will avoid controversy to avoid offense to sponsors.

Rarick, Galen and Barrie Hartman. "The Effects of Competition on One Daily Newspaper's Content." Journalism Quarterly, Autumn 1966, vol. 43(3), pp. 459-468.

Analysis of a single newspaper in periods of no, moderate and intense competition shows that as competitive pressures increase, the choice of local and immediate reward items increases, as predicted.

"Reporting Conflict in An Age of Change." Columbia Journalism Review 9 (1), Spring 1970, pp. 24-25.

Recommendations of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence regarding the marketing of information about violent events.

Russo, Frank D. "A study of bias in TV coverage of the Vietnam War: 1969 and 1970." Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 35 (4), Winter 1972, pp. 539-43.

Russo notes that what may appear as bias may be a revulsion against content.

Ryan, M. "News Content, Geographical Origin and Perceived Media Credibility." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50(2), 1973, p. 312-

This factorial study finds that newspapers are believed more than TV in some areas, e.g. state public affairs and science; TV is more believed in other areas, e.g. in news of student protest.

Sasser, Emery L. and John T. Russell. "The Fallacy of News Judgment." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 49(2), Summer 1972, pp. 280-284.

A lack of consistency in emphasis and in use of similar stories leads to the conclusion that there is no such thing as news of the day important to the public nor editors with background and training to recognize what that news is.

Schiltz, Timothy. "Perspective of Managing Editors on Coverage of Foreign Policy News." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50 (4), Winter 1973, pp. 716-721.

Newsmen feel that readership of foreign policy news is high and that newspapers have greater influence on policy than other mass media.

Schwoebel, Jean. "The Miracle 'Le Monde' Wrought" (the coming newsroom revolution:1). Columbia Journalism Review 9 (2), Summer 1970, pp. 8-11.

The diplomatic editor of Le Monde and architect of its staff-controlled management structure discusses the significance of "reporter power" in the U.S.

Shafer, Bryon and Richard Larson. "Did TV Create the 'Social issue'". Columbia Journalism Review, vol. XI(3), Sept./Oct. 1972, pp. 10-17.

Shafer and Larson press for public education through TV news, not public fright. They maintain that TV could make Law and Order an issue of real local crime and real local disruption, rather than one of magnified disorder bootlegged in through the evening news.

Sigal, Leon V. Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking. Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1973, 221 p.

Sigal concentrates on the interactions between persons in government and those of the press and the effects on governmental outcomes.

Singer, Benjamin D. "Violence, Protest, and War in Television News: the U.S. and Canada Compared." Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 34(4), Winter 1970-71, pp. 611-616.

An analysis of "CBC National News" and "CBS Evening News" indicated that the American television news show exceeded the Canadian program in aggression items (on violence, protest or war) for everyone of the 21 consecutive days monitored, typically at a rate of two-to-one.

Slater, John W. and Maxwell E. McCombs. "Some Aspects of Broadcast News Coverage and Riot Participation." Journal of Broadcasting, vol. 13(4), pp. 366-70, Fall 1970.

This study indicates that self-imposed censorship may be ineffective, since would-be participants have access to other information.

Small, William J. To Kill a Messenger: Television News and the Real World. New York: Hastings House, 1970.

Small discusses the role of television in the news events it covers as a "harbinger of ill tidings" and public reaction to it.

"Task Force Comments on the Press and Violence." Editor and Publisher, vol. 103 (3), Jan. 17, 1970, p. 50.

Advocates advance contacts with the police and community dissident groups and recommends close press contacts with proposed rumour clearance centers.

"Television and Violence." Television Quarterly, vol. 8(1), Winter 1968, pp. 30-81.

FCC Commissioner Johnson says the use of stories of violence is a news judgment and is subject to professional responsibility. Commissioner Loevinger calls for an industry grievance committee. Others suggest that the skill of the journalist is judged by how well he tells disturbances "like they are."

Trayes, Edward J. "News/Feature Services by Circulation Group Use." Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1972.

After studying U.S. newspapers with circulations of 10,000 and under to 500,000 and over, Trayes concludes that no newspaper can adequately inform its readers without use of the services supplying regional, national and world coverage.

"TV Journalism: More Meaning, Wider Range, Harder Work, Bigger Budgets." Broadcasting, Aug. 20, 1973, pp. 17-23.

Aggressive "why" news coverage is "in," news programs offer expanding diversity as audiences become more selective and competition from independents increases.

Weaver, David H. and L. E. Mullins. "Content and Format Characteristics of Competing Daily Newspapers." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 52, Summer 1975, pp. 257-264.

Leading and trailing papers (highest, lowest circulation newspapers respectively in the same city) were not found

to be significantly different regarding average percentages of news hole space devoted to specific subjects, e.g. crime, vice: 2.7% (leading) 2.4% (trailing).

Whiteside, Thomas. "Corridor of Mirrors: The Television Editorial Process, Chicago." Columbia Journalism Review, 7(4), Winter 1969, pp. 35-54.

Whiteside discusses institutional determinants of content in the television news room.

Williamson, Lenora. "Page 1 Fire Photos Draw Reader Protests." Editor and Publisher, Aug. 30, 1975, pp. 14-15.

A sequence of dramatic photographs of falling victims of a Boston fire stirs reader protest and editorial explanation.

Winsbury, Rex. "Snobbish, Cruel and Obsessed by Sex -- Is Such a Press Necessary?" Campaign, May 29, 1970, p. 17.

Winsbury concludes that such papers as Britain's sensational News of the World are "the price of democracy."

Witcover, Jules. "Washington: the Workhorse Wire Services." Columbia Journalism Review. Summer 1969, vol. 8(2), pp. 9-15.

The majority of American and Canadian newspapers depend on two major wire services for Washington news. More interpretive and more enterprise reporting is needed for them to carry their responsibility well.

PRESS PERSONNEL ISSUES

Anson, Robert Sam. "Selling Out To Television: Confessions of a Print Man Turned Electronic." Television Quarterly, Vol. 10(4), Summer 1973, pp. 40-43.

Anson discussed the supposed differences between print and electronic journalists, quoting Timothy Crouse that all journalists are "shy egomaniacs."

Bogart, Leo. "The Management of Mass Media: An Agenda for Research." Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 37, No. 4, 1973-74, pp. 580-589.

Bogart suggests priority areas for empirical research on media management, e.g. inter-media competition; government subsidies vs. freedom from intervention; self-censorship of content to avoid external control; monopoly controls; public broadcasting and interference; economics of cable broadcasting . . .

Chang, Won H. "Characteristics and Self-Perceptions of Women's Page Editors." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 52 (1), 1975, pp. 61-65.

This national survey shows that women do get lower pay than men in women's departments, but women do see opportunities of improvement of the situation.

Duscha, Julius. "Why the Good Young Men Leave Newspapers." ASNE Bulletin 511, Sept. 1967, pp. 3-4.

The problem: low pay and an "anti-intellectual atmosphere" in most city rooms and editor's offices.

Epstein, Edward Jay. "The Values of Newsmen." Television Quarterly, vol. 10(2), Winter 1973, pp. 9-22.

Epstein discusses the social psychology of news personnel.

Erwin, Ray. "Employment Practices Hit by City Editor." Editor and Publisher, vol. 98 (27), July 3, 1965, p. 11.

A city editor tells journalism teachers that "employment practices of newspapers are out of the stone age of personnel management."

Fang, Irving E. and Frank W. Gewal. "A Survey of Salaries and Hiring Preferences in Television News." Journal of Broadcasting, vol. XV, No. 4, Fall 1971, pp. 421-433.

From a U.S. national survey of UHF and VHF TV stations, Fang and Gewal concluded that salary range is very wide (from less than \$4000 to more than \$16000 for starting

salaries). Beginning in smaller cities affords the best opportunity of learning broadcast journalism, opportunities for women are widening, most news directors prefer journalism grads or experienced reporters who won't require training.

Grey, David L. "Decision-Making by a Reporter Under Deadline Pressure." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 43(3), Autumn 1966, pp. 419-428.

Observations of a Supreme Court reporter yields a minute-by-minute diary and suggestions as to how a newsman evaluates and writes stories under a deadline.

Johnstone, John W. C. "Organizational Constraints on Newswork." Journalism Quarterly, 53(1), Spring 1976, pp. 5-13.

A national American survey finds evidence that increasing centralization in news industry increases job dissatisfaction because of decrease in autonomy.

Johnstone, John W. C., et al. "The Professional Values of American Newsmen." Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 36 (4), Winter 1972-73, pp. 522-540.

Johnstone et al discuss their research on a national U.S. sample of media personnel. Internal cleavages occurred regarding journalistic professionalism along lines of education, training, age and environment (urban vs. rural).

Kernan, Jerome B. and Leslie B. Heiman. "Information Distortion and Personality." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 49(4), pp. 698-701.

A controlled experiment shows that neuroticism predicts information distortion where introversion-extraversion does not. The neurotic both over-and underestimates quantitative information.

Lynch, Mervin D. and Dan Kays. "Effects on Journalistic Performance of Creativity and Task Dispersion." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 44(3), Autumn 1967, pp. 508-512.

Creativity is associated with productivity and low lexical diversity and syntactic dispersion; all subjects showed superior performance when the writing tasks were widely dispersed in time.

Markham, David. "The Dimensions of Source Credibility of Television Newsasters." Journal of Communications, Vol. 18(1), March 1968, pp. 57-64.

Study of audience perception of television newscasters indicates validity of message, showmanship and trustworthiness are major dimensions of credibility.

McLeod, Jack M. and Searle E. Hawley, Jr. "Professionalization Among Newsmen." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 41 (4), Autumn 1964, pp. 529-538.

A method of indexing Professional Orientation among journalists is presented. Important distinctions emerged between editorial and non-editorial groups. Editorial staff tended to generally emphasize responsibility and objectivity; non-editorials mixed excitement into their evaluative judgments.

Stanton, Barbara. "How Detroit's Newspapers Set the Blackout Record." Columbia Journalism Review, vol. 3(4), Winter 1964.

A Free Press reporter recounts the issues and miscalculations that left the country's fifth city without regular papers for 134 days in an election year. The chief issue: automation.

Thrush, Robin. "Behind TV News: The Top Newscasters Talk Back About How They See Their Jobs." Family Weekly, Feb. 1, 1976, p. 4.

Seven prominent newsmen offer opinions on censorship, gloom and bias in TV news.

Wilson, C. Edward. "Why Canadian Newsmen Leave Their Papers." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 43(4), Winter 1966, pp. 769-772.

From a survey of Canadian newspaper journalists who had left the field, the general impression emerging from their answers was that insufficient pay was a major factor in their leaving but not the only one. Lack of personal satisfaction, interference of management in news handling, and a lack of opportunity for advancement also operated as major reasons for leaving daily journalism.

CRITICISM OF THE PRESS

Altschull, J. H. "Journalist and Instant History - Example of the Jackal Syndrome." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50(3), 1973, p. 489-

Citing reports of the U.S. 1960 election debates as decisive, and widespread stories of Black Panther murders as examples, Altschull discusses "the jackal syndrome" -- an adventurous reporter cites a "fact" which other members of the media then adopt as gospel and spread throughout the country, regardless of the "fact's" truth.

Argyris, Chris. Behind the Front Page: Organizational Self-Renewal in a Metropolitan Newspaper. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1974.

After participant observation at a newspaper, Argyris purports that journalists are not the mythical saints that society sometimes considers them.

Bagdikian, Ben H. The Effete Conspiracy and Other Crimes by the Press. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Bagdikian assesses the performance of the mass media to answer the charges levied by Spiro Agnew.

Bagdikian, Ben H. "Fat Newspapers and Slim Coverage." Columbia Journalism Review, September/October, 1973, vol. 12(3), pp. 15-20.

U.S. dailies are growing fatter, but 83% of the pages added since 1950 are advertising, and much of the rest is "soft" news or puffery. Bagdikian foresees that the future video home-terminal news format will depend upon perceptive reportage and skilled analysis of events.

Bagdikian, Ben H. "Newspapers: Learning (too slowly) to adapt to TV." Columbia Journalism Review, 12 (4), Nov./Dec. 73, pp. 44-51.

A study of newspapers shows that most are not offering the analysis and interpretation needed to supplement live TV coverage.

Bagdikian, Ben H. "The Way It Was and the Way I Call Them." Columbia Journalism Review, vol. 5(3), Fall 1966, pp. 5-10.

Bagdikian criticizes columnists, especially right-wingers, for their careless handling of facts.

Barnett, William L. "Survey Shows Few Papers Are Using Ombudsmen." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50(1), Spring, 1973, pp. 153-156.

It is apparent from this study that the reader-access function of ombudsmanship has achieved little status among the major daily papers in the U.S.

Brown, R. "Accuracy, Fairness, Credibility." Editor and Publisher. April 27, 1974, p. 60.

Reporting on results of the ASNE and ANPA annual meetings, Brown notes that "accuracy, fairness and credibility should be the theme for 1974."

Brown, R. "Criticism From Within." Editor and Publisher, Feb. 16, 1974, p. 44.

The debate within the U.S. newspaper business is discussed regarding CIA-employed reporters and the overplaying of Watergate in the news.

Chomsky, N. "Reporting IndoChina - News Media and Legitimation of Lies." Social Policy, vol. 4(2), 1973, pp. 4-19.

Chomsky discusses publication and suppression of news for political convenience, claiming that little difference exists between Saigon censorship and the American model.

Cirino, Robert. Don't Blame the People: How the News Media Use Bias, Distortion and Censorship to Manipulate Public Opinion. New York: Vintage Books, 1971.

From a content analysis of presentations by selected major news organizations, Cirino launches a harangue against middle-of-the-road establishment news media.

"Crisis Coverage." Newsweek, vol. 70(18), Oct. 30, 1968, pp. 60-62.

In the heat of competition, newspapermen are quick to blame television for inflaming riots both are covering, but all media should take the blame for inflaming passions and catapulting minor extremists into prominence.

"Cut Out Carnival Coverage." Broadcasting, vol. 70(24), June 13, 1966, p. 72.

Following reversal by U.S. Supreme Court in the Sheppard murder case, broadcast newsmen can expect more stringent measures to control coverage of criminal trials.

Daniels, Derek. "Challenge to J-Educators: Newsprint Shortage will Bring Fewer Pages, More 'Useful' News." Journalism Educator, vol. 29(3), Oct. 1974, pp. 3-6.

Daniels views immediate utility of information as the crucial consideration for future newspapers as the supply of newsprint decreases in response to economic determinants.

Diamond, Edwin. "Multiplying Media Voices." Columbia Journalism Review, vol. 8(4), Winter, 1969-70, pp. 22-27.

Diamond stresses the importance of the alternate press in greater access to and for readers. He advances five ideas to further the achievement of media diversity.

Emmet, Christopher. "The Media and the Assassinations." National Review, vol. 20(26), July 30, 1968, pp. 749-9.

"Establishment press" should not have suppressed Sirhan's diary because its publication helped improve U.S. image in the world. Too much TV coverage of mourning increased morbid and hysterical reactions.

English, Earl. "Journalism's Public Responsibility is Greater than Formerly Believed." Journalism Educator, vol. 30(3), Oct. 1975, pp. 12-17.

English presses for a consideration of General Semantics in journalism education as a framework of protection for themselves and the public against the perils of mis-used symbols.

Epstein, Edward Jay. Between Fact and Fiction: The Problems of Journalism. New York: Vintage Books, 1975.

Epstein tends to dismiss all daily journalism—from CBS news to the New York Times as useless or dangerous, characterizes the press role in Watergate as a 'David and Goliath' myth yet still manages to assess the value of American journalism favourably.

Friendly, Fred. Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control. New York: Random House, 1967.

A biting critique of CBS' news policy by a former news executive of that network.

Geiger, Louis G. "Muckrakers-Then and Now." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 43(3), Autumn 1966, pp. 469-476.

Muckrakers set out to create a general climate of reform and personal responsibility. Their essential failure was as much due to limitations in their media and audience as in themselves. Today, reform and good works have been institutionalized negating the muckrakers optimistic for the personal involvement.

Gerald, J. Edward. The Social Responsibility of the Press.  
Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1963, 214 pp.

A thoughtful examination of the press as a commercial and professional agency and of its relationship to other institutions within society. The author clearly suggests that the press does not live up to its responsibility.

Goldenson, Leonard H. and Elmer W. Lower. "Some Other Views on Violence and the Proper Journalistic Function of Television." Television Quarterly, vol. 8(1), Winter 1970, pp. 63-9.

In reporting disturbances, broadcast news is criticised by Americans who are reluctant to accept bad news.

Grubb, Donald R. "Media Will Dig for the 'Why,' Offer Exciting Opportunities in the 1970's." Journalism Educator, vol. 25(1), 1970, pp. 11-12.

Among other changes, Grubb foresees that sensational (e.g. crime) news will yield to socially significant content in the 1970's.

Guenin, Zena Beth. "Women's Pages in American Newspapers: Missing Out on Contemporary Content." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 52, No. 1, 1975, pp. 66-69, 75.

The call of critics for story variety and a broadened audience appeal is not being met by traditional women's pages or by modern re-named sections.

Haley, Sir William. "Where TV News Fails." Columbia Journalism Review, vol. IX(1), Spring 1970, pp. 7-11.

Television newsmen have become technology's captives. To escape they must go beyond showing "happenings" and reintroduce "sifting, reporting, and evaluating."

Hausman, Linda Weiner. Criticism of the Press in U.S. Periodicals, 1900-1939: An Annotated Bibliography.  
Austin, Texas: Association for Education in Journalism, 1967, 49 pp. (Journalism Monographs, no. 4).

Hohenberg, John. The News Media: A Journalist Looks at His Profession. New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1968.

Topics include truth in the coverage of Vietnam, "herd" journalism, "junket" journalism, the credibility gap and the news media's role in shaping public opinion.

"How the Vise has Tightened on Broadcast Journalism." Broadcasting, Feb. 19, 1973, pp. 24, 26.

The Alfred I. du Pont-Columbia University Survey of Broadcast Journalism (1971-72) found newsmen caught in the battle between management-stockholder, politician-bureaucrat trying to keep their wealth, power and self-respect. They rejected the Nixon administration's deliberate attempts to discredit the press, claiming that newsmen were doing a generally perceptive job.

Isaacs, Norman. "The Bumpy Road Ahead." Grassroots Editor, vol. 11(9), May-June 1970, pp. 12-16.

The public is angry, partly because newspaper journalism is complacent and arrogant.

Kelley, C. "Crime and the News Media." Editor and Publisher, June 15, 1974, p. 62.

Clarence M. Kelley, Director of the F.B.I. advocates restraint in publicizing such vogueish crimes as sky-jacking and kidnapping to help combat lawlessness.

"Kennedy and King Murders Lead List." Editor and Publisher, vol. 101(52), Dec. 28, 1968, p. 32.

AP members voted assassinations top news stories of 1968.

Knopf, Terry Ann. "Media Myths on Violence." Columbia Journalism Review, vol. 9(1), Spring 1970, pp. 17-23.

A study of media performance reveals improvements and a healthy willingness to experiment with new procedures. But certain shortcomings persist: no attempt is made to place violence in a social context, criminals are stereotypically viewed to reinforce public myths . . .

Knopf, Terry Ann. "Sniping Incidents and the Role of the Press." Nieman Reports, vol. 23(2), June 1969, p. 1, 25-29.

Knopf purports that the press has been constructing a scenario on armed uprisings and asks that the story line be dropped in favour of more restrained, judicious and accurate reporting, and more creative, background journalism.

LeRoy, David J. Mass News: Practices, Controversies and Alternatives. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973.

Discussion of TV news, newspapers, wireservices and professionalism among journalists.

Lindstrom, Carl E. The Fading American Newspaper. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960, 283 pp.

A cogent, hard-hitting critique of the present day newspaper by an experienced newspaperman. He cites the failure of publishers to meet challenges, to keep up with mechanical developments, and to move away from outmoded approaches in writing.

Long, Howard. "The Press: Healer or Mortician?" Grassroots Editor, vol. 11(2), pp. 2-4, Mar.-Apr. 1970.

A reluctance to embrace self-criticism, and a trend toward concentration contribute to the media's problems.

Lowry, Dennis T. "Gresham's Law and Network TV News Selection." Journal of Broadcasting, vol. 15(4), Fall 1971, pp. 397-408.

Contrary to Spiro Agnew's assertion, bad news does not drive out good news on network TV evening newscasts (one third bad vs. two thirds other). Bad news (war, crime, violence . . .) is given insignificant position preference and more visual emphasis than 'other news.' ABC carried significantly more bad news than CBS or NBC (13%, 14% respectively).

Marsh, H.D. "How Journalism Teachers View Media News Performance." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 50(1) 1973, pp. 156-158.

Teaching specialty was a determinant of attitudes toward media news performance, with editorial-print media teachers tending toward newspapers as more potent news media than television, while other teachers tend to exhibit opposite points of view.

Murphy, James E. The New Journalism: A Critical Perspective (Journalism Monographs 34). Lexington, Ky.: Association for Education in Journalism, 1974.

Murphy questions the utility of the "New Journalism" concept of reporting.

"The New Press Critics: Grassroots Review Samples #3." Columbia Journalism Review, Special Supplement, Nov.-Dec. 1972, pp. 29-40.

Excerpts from various U.S. periodicals criticizing press performance from the treatment of hijackers to the over-emphasis on trivia in show-biz news.

Otto, Herbert A. "Sex and Violence on the American News Stand." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 40, pp. 19-26.

"Prof. Tebbel Blasts Press Inadequacies." Editor and Publisher, vol. 98(17), April 24, 1965, p. 88.

A noted historian of journalism talks of press failings.

Rivers, William L. and Everette E. Dennis. "Other Voices Linger." Journalism Educator, vol. 29(2), July, 1974, pp. 5-9.

Criticism of the New Journalism is broken down into five categories and the necessity of diversity in Journalism is stressed.

Schlesinger, Arthur M. "Give the Public a Break!" Nieman Reports, vol. 19:3, pp. 18-19, Sept. 1965.

A succinct suggestion for more hard news and less entertainment in the news columns, and for the establishment of local "advisory councils" of citizens to appraise the "quality and balance" of a paper's news coverage.

Seldes, Gilbert. "Television: In Peril of Change." Television Quarterly, vol. 4(2), Spring 1965, pp. 9-16.

Seldes asks if TV went too far in covering the Kennedy assassination and wonders if TV were primarily responsible for Oswald's murder.

Sheldon, Courtney R. "The White House and the Press: (Almost) Everybody Out of the Pool." Mass Comm. Review, vol. 1, No. 1, Aug. 1973, pp. 3-8.

Sheldon criticizes Nixon's use of the "pool" concept as a substitution for traditional dialogue between government and press.

Skornia, H. J. "Broadcast News: A Trade in Need of Professionalizing." Educational Broadcasting Review, June 1973, pp. 137-148.

Stein, M. L. "The Press Under Assault: View From the U.S." Saturday Review, vol. 51(41), pp. 75-6, Oct. 12, 1968.

The Press has become the nation's scapegoat for racial rioting, crime, etc. in the U.S.

Stone, Vernon A. and Thomas L. Beell. "To Kill a Messenger: A Case of Congruity." Journalism Quarterly, vol. 52, Spring 1975, pp. 111-114.

Results of an experiment support the argument that the mass media share the hazards of the ancient Persian Messengers who brought bad news. Bias, in the form of newscaster endorsement of a report, tended to lower his esteem with the audience even when the news was good.

Stosteck, H. "Factors Influencing Appeal of TV News Personalities." Journal of Broadcasting, Winter 1973-74, pp. 63-71.

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Tatarian, Roger. "We Must Be Doing Something Right." Nieman Reports, vol. 21(3), Sept. 1967, pp. 20-3.

Criticism coming from all sides, suggests to Tatarian that newspapers, after all, "must be doing something right."

Tobin, Richard L. "More Violent Than Ever." Saturday Review, vol. 51(45), Nov. 9, 1968, pp. 79-80.

Tobin claims the media deserve criticism for their narrow concept of what constitutes news, for bad news, and violence as TV's staple, and for failure to meet public needs.

"' . . . Too Many Instances Where Newspapers and TV Provoked Violence . . .'" IPI, vol. 18(3-4), pp. 17-20, Jul./Aug. 1969..

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Wiggins, J. Russell. "The Facts Are What Matter." Nieman Reports, pp. 15-18, Vol. XXV, No. 1, Mar. 1971.

Wiggins claims that adversary journalism will not lead the public to love the journalism profession, presenting facts instead of conjecture will gain respect and credibility.

Young, Whitney, Jr. "The Social Responsibility of Broadcasters." Television Quarterly, vol. 8(2), pp. 7-17, Spring 1969.

Young claims that the media seldom document the injustices which lead to the violent demonstrations.





